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H. DE BALZAC

COMÉDIE HUMAINE

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H. DE BALZAC

LA GRANDE BRETÊCHE

AND OTHER STORIES

Translated by

CLARA BELL

with a Preface by

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'REMEMBER, IF YOU SHOULD FIND NO ONE THERE, EVERYTHING MUST BE AT AN END BETWEEN YOU AND ME' (*La Grand Bretêche*) . . . . *Frontispiece*

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Drawn and Etched by D. Murray-Smith.

PREFACE

THERE is a good deal of inequality in the present collection, which contains work conceived in very different manners and executed at very different times.

The story which used to come first, *La Paix du Ménage*, is scarcely worthy of precedence, save as eldest. It belongs to the time when Balzac, though he had found his way, was not yet walking surely in it; and besides, it belongs to a class of work which, though he continued to practise in it almost to the end, never was his happiest class. The attraction which these stories of family broils and rearrangements in 'high life' had for Balzac must always be rather inexplicable, except to those who are complaisant enough to allow him the knowledge of that high life which, though constantly contested by some of the best authorities, though more than dubious to impartial critics, is a sort of religion to extreme Balzacians. In this particular case, too, the intrigue is of scanty interest, and requires a lighter and more airy handling than Balzac could often—perhaps than he could ever—give. The fact is that he was too conscientious for this sort of thing, which in the hands of 'Gyp' would have been as thoroughly at home as it is out of place in his.

La Fausse Maîtresse is of very different value. It may indeed be called somewhat fantastic, and the final trait, whether false or not to nature, will provoke some critics.

But the devotion of Paz is exactly one of those things which suited Balzac best, and which he could handle most effectively. And perhaps the irony is not too severe, though it represents his idol, after having been the object of such a love as his, on the point of surrendering to a worthless *poseur* like La Palférine, whom, it may be observed in passing, Balzac never brings on the scene except with the result, whether by deliberate purpose or not, of dealing a covert blow at the weakness of women and their proneness to low ideals. It ought however to be said in fairness that he seems to have had a sort of admiration for this raff of a Rusticoli himself. Clémentine, despite her lack of steadiness, is not one of his most iconoclastic sketches; and Laginski, though somewhat doubling the notion of Polish foibles—afterwards again conveyed in Wenceslas Steinbock, and whether from this cause or some other established to the present day as a tradition in France—has distinct merits and attractions.

The two *Études de femme*, to which *La Grande Bretêche* is an appendix, rise gradually from an ordinary to an extraordinary level. The adventure of Madame de Listomère and Rastignac is slight but good; and one rather wishes that Balzac had oftener confined sketches of the sort to limits so suitable for a sketch. The false prude comes out with remarkable success; and if Rastignac does not cut so good a figure in point of cleverness as in some others of his numerous appearances, he is more natural than in some of them.

The stories of the *Autre Étude* are called in the *Répertoire* of MM. Christophe and Cerfberr '*d'exquises causeries*.' It is not certain that all readers will acquiesce

in this epithet, which is used several times in the piece by Balzac himself, though I do not remember that the combination of it with *causerie* is textual. In the first place, the discourses of Marsay and Blondet might be called by unfriendly critics rather sermons than *causeries*. In the second, though Marsay is rather less of a 'tiger' than in some of his other performances, the coxcombry of the exhibition exceeds its charm, while Blondet's discussion of womankind has the unreality of all these discussions. Montriveau's story is considerably better than either of these; and it leads up very well to *La Grande Bretêche*.

This latter is one of the best known of Balzac's short stories, and may rank among the half-dozen best of all. Contrary to a habit which, though not invariable, is too common with him, he is not long in 'getting under way,' and he does not waste a single stroke in drawing the actual catastrophe. Bianchon, who generally has a good part assigned him, is here unusually lucky. Indeed, the piece is so short and so good, that critical dwelling on it is almost an impertinence.

Albert Savarus, with its enshrined story of 'L'Ambitieux par Amour' (something of an oddity for Balzac, who often puts a story within a story, but less formally than this) contains various appeals, and shows not a few of its author's well-known interests in politics, in affairs, in newspapers, not to mention the enumerations of *dots* and fortunes which he never could refuse himself. The affection of Savarus for the Duchesse d'Argaiolo may interest different persons differently. It seems to me a little *fade*. But the character of Rosalie de Watteville is in a very different rank. Here only, except, perhaps,

in the case of Mademoiselle de Verneuil, whose unlucky experiences had emancipated her, has Balzac depicted a girl full of character, individuality, and life. It was apparently necessary that Rosalie should be made not wholly amiable in order to obtain this accession of wits and force, and to be freed from the fatal gift of *candeur*, the curse of the French *ingénue*. Her creator has also thought proper to punish her further, and cruelly, at the end of the book. Nevertheless, though her story may be less interesting than either of theirs, it is impossible not to put her in a much higher rank as a heroine than either Eugénie or Ursule, and not to wish that Balzac had included the conception of her in a more important structure of fiction.

It should, perhaps, be observed that Mademoiselle des Touches, the hostess at whose table the three central stories of this volume were told, and who figures elsewhere, especially in *Béatrix*, is one of the not very numerous personages of the *Comédie* who are undoubtedly drawn from a distinguished living original—in this case George Sand. I must refer to the Introduction to *Béatrix* itself for more about her, it being desirable not to 'double' in these short prefaces.

La Paix du Ménage formed part of the *Scènes de la Vie Privée* from their first appearance in 1830, and entered with the rest into the *Comédie*. Then, and then only, was the dedication to Valentine Surville, Balzac's niece, added. At this latter period *La Fausse Maîtresse* made its first appearance in the same division, having been just before (December 1841) printed serially in the *Siècle* with five chapters, while in the first volume issue it had ten. The first *Étude de femme* came out in *La*

Mode in March 1830, next year at the end of the *Peau de Chagrin*, in 1835 (with a new title, *Profil de Marquise*) in the *Scènes de la Vie Parisienne*, and when the *Comédie* was collected, in its actual position and with its actual title. The bibliography of the next two stories is so complicated that it occupies fourteen of M. de Lovenjoul's pages, and that I despair of presenting any acceptable abstract of it in a small space. Balzac seems to have reserved them for the most exemplary victims of his mania for rehandling. He changed their titles; he took from them and inserted in them passages and episodes afterwards removed elsewhere or omitted altogether; he published them in a dozen different places, connections, and forms. *Albert Savarus* had a somewhat less tormented fate, appearing in sixty headed chapters in the *Siècle* for May and June 1842, and then assuming its place in the *Comédie*. But though left there, it also formed part of a two volume issue by Souverain in 1844, in company with *La Muse du département*. 'Rosalie' was at first named 'Philomène.'

G. S.

A STUDY OF WOMAN

Dedicated to the Marquis Jean-Charles di Negro.

THE Marquise de Listomère is a young woman brought up in the spirit of the Restoration. She has principles, she fasts in season, she takes the Sacrament, she goes very much dressed to balls, to the Bouffons, to the Opera; her spiritual director allows her to combine the sacred and the profane. Always on good terms with the Church and the world, she is an incarnation of the present time, and seems to have taken the word *Legality* for her motto. The Marquise's conduct is marked by exactly enough devotion to enable her, under another Maintenon, to achieve the gloomy piety of the last days of Louis XIV., and enough worldliness to adopt the manners and gallantry of the earlier years of his reign, if they ever could return.

Just now she is virtuous from interest, or, perhaps, by taste. Married some seven years since to the Marquis de Listomère, a deputy who expects a peerage, she perhaps thinks that her conduct may promote the ambitions of the family. Some women wait to pass judgment on her till Monsieur de Listomère is made Pair de France, and till she is six-and-thirty—a time of life when most women discover that they are the dupes of social laws.

The Marquis is an insignificant personage; he is in favour at Court; his good qualities, like his faults, are negative; the former can no more give him a reputation for

virtue than the latter can give him the sort of brilliancy bestowed by vice. As a deputy he never speaks, but he votes 'straight'; and at home, he behaves as he does in the Chamber. He is considered the best husband in France. Though he is incapable of enthusiasms, he never scolds, unless he is kept waiting. His friends nickname him 'Cloudy weather'; and, in fact, there is in him no excessively bright light, and no utter darkness. He is exactly like all the Ministers that have succeeded each other in France since the Charter.

A woman with principles could hardly have fallen into better hands. Is it not a great thing for a virtuous woman to have married a man incapable of a folly? Dandies have been known to venture on the impertinence of slightly pressing the Marquise's hand when dancing with her; they met only looks of scorn, and all have experienced that insulting indifference which, like spring frosts, chills the germs of the fairest hopes. Handsome men, witty men, coxcombs, sentimental men who derive nourishment from sucking the knob of their walking-sticks, men of name and men of fame, men of high birth and of low, all have blenched before her. She has won the right of talking as long and as often as she pleases with men whom she thinks intelligent, without being entered in the calendar of scandal. Some coquettes are capable of pursuing this plan for seven years on end, to gratify their fancy at last; but to ascribe such a covert motive to Madame de Listomère would be to calumniate her. I had been so happy as to meet this Phœnix of a Marquise; she talks well, I am a good listener. I pleased her, and I go to her evening parties. This was the object of my ambition.

Neither plain nor pretty, Madame de Listomère has white teeth, a brilliant complexion, and very red lips; she is tall and well made, has a small, slender foot, which she does not display; her eyes, far from being dulled, as most eyes are in Paris, have a soft gleam which becomes

magical when by chance she is animated. You feel there is a soul under this ill-defined personality. When she is interested in the conversation, she reveals the grace that lies buried under the prudery of cold demeanour, and then she is charming. She does not crave for success, and she gets it. We always find the thing we do not seek. This statement is too often true not to become a proverb one day. It will be the moral of this tale, which I should not allow myself to relate if it were not at this moment the talk of every drawing-room in Paris.

One evening, about a month since, the Marquise de Listomère danced with a young man as modest as he is heedless, full of good qualities, but showing only his bad ones; he is impassioned, and laughs at passion; he has talent, and hides it; he assumes the *savant* with aristocrats, and affects to be aristocratic with savants.

Eugène de Rastignac is one of those very sensible young men who try everything, and seem to sound other men to discover what the future will bring forth. Pending the age when he will be ambitious, he laughs at everything; he has grace and originality—two qualities which are rare, because they exclude each other. Without aiming at success, he talked to Madame de Listomère for about half an hour. While following the deviations of a conversation which, beginning with *William Tell*, went on to the duties of woman, he looked at the Marquise more than once in a way to embarrass her; then he left her, and spoke to her no more all the evening. He danced, sat down to *écarté*, lost a little money, and went home to bed. I have the honour of assuring you that this is exactly what happened. I have added, I have omitted nothing.

The next morning Rastignac woke late, remained in bed, where he gave himself up, no doubt, to some of those morning day-dreams in which a young man glides, like a sylph, behind more than one curtain of silk, wool, or cotton. At such moments, the heavier the body is

with sleep, the more nimble is the fancy. Finally Rastignac got up without yawning too much, as so many ill-bred people do, rang for his man-servant, ordered some tea, and drank of it immoderately—which will not seem strange to those who like tea; but, to account for this to those persons who only regard tea as a panacea for indigestion, I will add that Eugène was writing; he sat at his ease, and his feet were more often on the fire-dogs than in his foot-muff.

Oh! to sit with your feet on the polished bar that rests on the two brackets of a fender, and dream of your love affairs while wrapped in your dressing-gown, is so delightful a thing, that I deeply regret having no mistress, no fire-dogs, and no dressing-gown. When I shall have all those good things, I shall not write my experiences, I shall take the benefit of them.

The first letter Eugène had to write was finished in a quarter of an hour. He folded it, sealed it, and left it lying in front of him without any address. The second letter, begun at eleven o'clock, was not finished till noon. The four pages were written all over.

'That woman runs in my head,' said he to himself as he folded the second missive, leaving it there, and intending to address it after ending his involuntary reverie. He crossed the fronts of his flowered dressing-gown, put his feet on a stool, stuffed his hands into the pockets of his red cashmere trousers, and threw himself back in a delicious armchair with deep ears, of which the seat and back were set at the comfortable angle of a hundred and twenty degrees. He drank no more tea, but remained passive, his eyes fixed on the little gilt fist which formed the knob of his fire-shovel, without seeing the shovel, or the hand, or the gilding. He did not even make up the fire. This was a great mistake! Is it not an intense pleasure to fidget with the fire when dreaming of women? Our fancy lends speech to the little blue tongues which suddenly burst up and babble on the hearth. We can

find a meaning in the sudden and noisy language of a *bourguignon*.

At this word I must pause and insert, for the benefit of the ignorant, an explanation vouchsafed by a very distinguished etymologist, who wishes to remain anonymous. *Bourguignon* is the popular and symbolical name given, ever since the reign of Charles VI., to the loud explosions which result in the ejection on to a rug or a dress of a fragment of charcoal, the germ of a conflagration. The heat, it is said, explodes a bubble of air remaining in the heart of the wood, in the trail or some gnawing grub. *Inde amor, inde Burgundus.* We quake as we see the charred pieces coming down like an avalanche when we had balanced them so industriously between two blazing logs. Oh! making up a wood-fire when you are in love is the material expression of your sentiments.

It was at this moment that I entered Eugène's room; he started violently, and said—

'So there you are, my dear Horace. How long have you been here?'

'I have this moment come.'

'Ah!'

He took the two letters, addressed them, and rang for his servant.

'Take these two notes.'

And Joseph went without a remark. Excellent servant!

And we proceeded to discuss the expedition to the Morea, in which I wanted to be employed as surgeon. Eugène pointed out that I should lose much by leaving Paris, and we then talked of indifferent things. I do not think I shall be blamed for omitting our conversation.

When Madame de Listomère rose at about two in the afternoon, her maid Caroline handed her a letter, which she read while Caroline was dressing her hair. (An

imprudence committed by a great many young wives.)

'Ah, dear angel of love, my treasure of life and happiness!'—on reading these words, the Marquise was going to throw the letter into the fire; but a fancy flashed through her head, which any virtuous woman will understand to a marvel, namely, to see how a man might end who began in this strain. She read on. When she turned her fourth page, she dropped her arms like a person who is tired.

'Caroline,' said she, 'go and find out who left this letter for me.'

'Madame, I took it from M. le Baron de Rastignac's man-servant.'

There was a long silence.

'Will Madame dress now?'

'No.'

'He must be excessively impertinent!' thought the Marquise.—I may ask any woman to make her own commentary.

Madame de Listomère closed hers with a formal resolution to shut her door on Monsieur Eugène, and, if she should meet him in company, to treat him with more than contempt; for his audacity was not to be compared with any of the other instances which the Marquise had at last forgiven. At first she thought she would keep the letter, but, on due reflection, she burned it.

'Madame has just received such a flaming love-letter, and she read it!' said Caroline to the housemaid.

'I never should have thought it of Madame,' said the old woman, quite astonished.

That evening the Marquise was at the house of the Marquis de Beauséant, where she would probably meet Rastignac. It was a Saturday. The Marquis de Beauséant was distantly related to Monsieur de Rastignac, so the young man could not fail to appear in the course of the evening. At two in the morning,

Madame de Listomère, who had stayed so late solely to crush Eugène by her coldness, had waited in vain. A witty writer, Stendahl, has given the whimsical name of crystallisation to the process worked out by the Marquise's mind before, during, and after this evening.

Four days later Eugène was scolding his man-servant.

'Look here, Joseph; I shall be obliged to get rid of you, my good fellow.'

'I beg your pardon, sir?'

'You do nothing but blunder. Where did you take the two letters I gave you on Friday?'

Joseph was bewildered. Like a statue in a cathedral porch he stood motionless, wholly absorbed in the travail of his ideas. Suddenly he smiled foolishly, and said—

'Monsieur, one was for Madame la Marquise de Listomère, Rue Saint-Dominique, and the other was for Monsieur's lawyer——'

'Are you sure of what you say?'

Joseph stood dumbfounded. I must evidently interfere—happening to be present at the moment.

'Joseph is right,' said I. Eugène turned round to me. 'I read the addresses quite involuntarily, and——'

'And,' said Eugène, interrupting me, 'was not one of them for Madame de Nucingen?'

'No, by all the devils! And so I supposed, my dear boy, that your heart had pirouetted from the Rue Saint-Lazare to the Rue Saint-Dominique.'

Eugène struck his forehead with the palm of his hand, and began to smile. Joseph saw plainly that the fault was none of his.

Now, there are certain moral reflections on which all young men should meditate? Mistake the first: Eugène thought it amusing to have made Madame de Listomère laugh at the blunder that had put her in possession of a love-letter which was not intended for her. Mistake the second: He did not go to see Madame de Listomère till four days after the misadventure, thus giving the

thoughts of a virtuous young woman time to crystallise. And there were a dozen more mistakes which must be passed over in silence to give ladies *ex professo* the pleasure of deducing them for the benefit of those who cannot guess them.

Eugène arrived at the Marquise's door; but as he was going in, the porter stopped him, and told him that Madame de Listomère was out. As he was getting into his carriage again, the Marquis came in.

'Come up, Eugène,' said he; 'my wife is at home.'

Oh! forgive the Marquis. A husband, however admirable, scarcely ever attains to perfection.

Rastignac as he went upstairs discerned the ten fallacies in worldly logic which stood on this page of the fair book of his life.

When Madame de Listomère saw her husband come in with Eugène, she could not help colouring. The young Baron observed the sudden flush. If the most modest of men never quite loses some little dregs of conceit, which he can no more get rid of than a woman can throw off her inevitable vanities, who can blame Eugène for saying to himself, 'What! this stronghold too?'—and he settled his head in his cravat. Though young men are not very avaricious, they all love to add a head to their collection of medals.

Monsieur de Listomère seized on the *Gazette de France*, which he saw in a corner by the fireplace, and went to the window to form, by the help of the newspaper, an opinion of his own as to the state of France. No woman, not even a prude, is long in embarrassment even in the most difficult situation in which she can find herself; she seems always to carry in her hand the fig-leaf given to her by our mother Eve. And so, when Eugène, having interpreted the orders given to the porter in a sense flattering to his vanity, made his bow to Madame de Listomère with a tolerably deliberate air, she was able to conceal all her thoughts behind one of those

feminine smiles, which are more impenetrable than a King's speech.

'Are you unwell, Madame? You had closed your door.'

'No, Monsieur.'

'You were going out perhaps?'

'Not at all.'

'You are expecting somebody?'

'Nobody.'

'If my visit is ill timed, you have only the Marquis to blame. I was obeying your mysterious orders when he himself invited me into the sanctuary.'

'Monsieur de Listomère was not in my confidence. There are certain secrets which it is not always prudent to share with one's husband.'

The firm, mild tone in which the Marquise spoke these words, and the imposing dignity of her glance, were enough to make Rastignac feel that he had been in too much haste to plume himself.

'I understand, Madame,' said he, laughing; 'I must therefore congratulate myself all the more on having met Monsieur le Marquis; he has procured me an opportunity for offering you an explanation, which would be fraught with danger, but that you are kindness itself.'

The Marquise looked at the young Baron with considerable astonishment, but she replied with dignity.

'On your part, Monsieur, silence will be the best excuse. On my side I promise you to forget entirely—a forgiveness you scarcely merit.'

'Forgiveness is needless, Madame, when there has been no offence.—The letter you received,' he added in an undertone, 'and which you must have thought so unseemly, was not intended for you.'

The Marquise smiled in spite of herself; she wished to appear offended.

'Why tell a falsehood?' she replied with an air of

disdainful amusement, but in a very friendly tone. 'Now that I have scolded you enough, I am quite ready to laugh at a stratagem not devoid of skill. I know some poor women who would be caught by it. "Good heavens, how he loves me!" they would say.' She forced a laugh, and added with an indulgent air, 'If we are to remain friends, let me hear nothing more of mistakes of which I cannot be the dupe.'

'On my honour, Madame, you are far more so than you fancy,' Eugène eagerly replied.

'What are you talking about?' asked Monsieur de Listomère, who for a minute had been listening to the conversation, without being able to pierce the darkness of its meaning.

'Oh, nothing that will interest you,' said Madame de Listomère.

The Marquis quietly returned to his paper, saying, 'I see Madame de Mortsauf is dead; your poor brother is at Clochegourde no doubt.'

'Do you know, Monsieur,' said the Marquise, addressing Eugène, 'that you have just made a very impertinent speech?'

'If I did not know the strictness of your principles,' he replied simply, 'I should fancy you either meant to put ideas into my head which I dare not allow myself, or to wring my secret from me; or perhaps, indeed, you wish to make fun of me.'

The Marquise smiled. This smile put Eugène out of patience.

'May you always believe, Madame, in the offence I did not commit!' said he. 'And I fervently hope that chance may not lead you to discover in society the person who was intended to read that letter——'

'What! Still Madame de Nucingen?' cried Madame de Listomère, more anxious to master the secret than to be revenged on the young man for his retort.

Eugène reddened. A man must be more than five-

and-twenty not to redden when he is blamed for the stupid fidelity which women laugh at only to avoid betraying how much they envy its object. However, he said, calmly enough, 'Why not, Madame?'

These are the blunders we commit at five-and-twenty. This confession agitated Madame de Listomère violently; but Eugène was not yet able to analyse a woman's face as seen in a glimpse, or from one side. Only her lips turned white. She rang to have some wood put on the fire, and so obliged Eugène to rise to take leave. 'If that is the case,' said the Marquise, stopping Eugène by her cold, precise manner, 'you will find it difficult, Monsieur, to explain by what chance my name happened to come to your pen. An address written on a letter is not like the first-come crush hat which a man may heedlessly take for his own on leaving a ball.'

Eugène, put quite out of countenance, looked at the Marquise with a mingled expression of stupidity and fatuousness; he felt that he was ridiculous, stammered out some schoolboy speech, and left. A few days later Madame de Listomère had indisputable proof of Eugène's veracity.

For more than a fortnight she has not gone into society.

The Marquis tells every one who asks him the reason of this change—

'My wife has a gastric attack.'

I, who attend her, and who know her secret, know that she is only suffering from a little nervous crisis, and takes advantage of it to stay quietly at home.

PARIS *February* 1839.

ANOTHER STUDY OF WOMAN

To Léon Gozlan as a Token of Literary Good-fellowship.

At Paris there are almost always two separate parties going on at every ball and rout. First, an official party, composed of the persons invited, a fashionable and much-bored circle. Each one grimaces for his neighbour's eye; most of the younger women are there for one person only; when each woman has assured herself that for that one she is the handsomest woman in the room, and that the opinion is perhaps shared by a few others, a few insignificant phrases are exchanged, such: 'Do you think of going away soon to La Crampade?' 'How well Madame de Portenduère sang!' 'Who is the little woman with such a load of diamonds?' Or, after firing off some smart epigrams, which give transient pleasure, and leave wounds that rankle long, the groups thin out, the mere lookers on go away, and the wax-lights burn down to the sconces.

The mistress of the house then waylays a few artists, amusing people or intimate friends, saying, 'Do not go yet; we will have a snug little supper.' These collect in some small room. The second, the real party, now begins; a party where, as of old, every one can hear what is said, conversation is general, each one is bound to be witty and to contribute to the amusement of all. Everything is made to tell, honest laughter takes the place of the gloom which in company saddens the

prettiest faces. In short, where the rout ends pleasure begins.

The Rout, a cold display of luxury, a review of self-conceits in full dress, is one of those English inventions which tend to *mechanise* other nations. England seems bent on seeing the whole world as dull as itself, and dull in the same way. So this second party is, in some French houses, a happy protest on the part of the old spirit of our light-hearted people. Only, unfortunately, so few houses protest; and the reason is a simple one. If we no longer have many suppers nowadays, it is because never, under any rule, have there been fewer men placed, established, and successful than under the reign of Louis Philippe, when the Revolution began again, lawfully. Everybody is on the march some whither, or trotting at the heels of Fortune. Time has become the costliest commodity, so no one can afford the lavish extravagance of going home to-morrow morning and getting up late. Hence, there is no second soirée now but at the houses of women rich enough to entertain, and since July 1830 such women may be counted in Paris.

In spite of the covert opposition of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, two or three women, among them Madame d'Espard and Mademoiselle des Touches, have not chosen to give up the share of influence they exercised in Paris, and have not closed their houses.

The salon of Mademoiselle des Touches is noted in Paris as being the last refuge where the old French wit has found a home, with its reserved depths, its myriad subtle byways, and its exquisite politeness. You will there still find grace of manner notwithstanding the conventionalities of courtesy, perfect freedom of talk notwithstanding the reserve which is natural to persons of breeding, and, above all, a liberal flow of ideas. No one there thinks of keeping his thought for a play; and no one regards a story as material for a book. In short, the hideous skeleton of literature at bay never stalks there,

on the prowl for a clever sally or an interesting subject.

The memory of one of these evenings especially dwells with me, less by reason of a confidence in which the illustrious de Marsay opened up one of the deepest recesses of woman's heart, than on account of the reflections to which his narrative gave rise, as to the changes that have taken place in the French woman since the fateful revolution of July.

On that evening chance had brought together several persons, whose indisputable merits have won them European reputations. This is not a piece of flattery addressed to France, for there were a good many foreigners present. And, indeed, the men who most shone were not the most famous. Ingenious repartee, acute remarks, admirable banter, pictures sketched with brilliant precision, all sparkled and flowed without elaboration, were poured out without disdain, but without effort, and were exquisitely expressed and delicately appreciated. The men of the world especially were conspicuous for their really artistic grace and spirit.

Elsewhere in Europe you will find elegant manners, cordiality, genial fellowship, and knowledge ; but only in Paris, in this drawing-room, and those to which I have alluded, does the particular wit abound which gives an agreeable and changeful unity to all these social qualities, an indescribable river-like flow which makes this profusion of ideas, of definitions, of anecdotes, of historical incidents, meander with ease. Paris, the capital of taste, alone possesses the science which makes conversation a tourney in which each type of wit is condensed into a shaft, each speaker utters his phrase and casts his experience in a word, in which every one finds amusement, relaxation, and exercise. Here, then, alone, will you exchange ideas ; here you need not, like the dolphin in the fable, carry a monkey on your shoulders; here you will be understood, and will not risk staking your gold pieces against base metal.

Here, again, secrets neatly betrayed, and talk, light or deep, play and eddy, changing their aspect and hue at every phrase. Eager criticism and crisp anecdotes lead on from one to the next. All eyes are listening, a gesture asks a question, and an expressive look gives the answer. In short, and in a word, everything is wit and mind.

The phenomenon of speech, which, when duly studied and well handled, is the power of the actor and the story-teller, had never so completely bewitched me. Nor was I alone under the influence of its spell; we all spent a delightful evening. The conversation had drifted into anecdote, and brought out in its rushing course some curious confessions, several portraits, and a thousand follies, which make this enchanting improvisation impossible to record; still, by setting these things down in all their natural freshness and abruptness, their elusive divarications, you may perhaps feel the charm of a real French evening, taken at the moment when the most engaging familiarity makes each one forget his own interests, his personal conceit, or, if you like, his pretensions.

At about two in the morning, as supper ended, no one was left sitting round the table but intimate friends, proved by an intercourse of fifteen years, and some persons of great taste and good breeding, who knew the world. By tacit agreement, perfectly carried out, at supper every one renounced his pretensions to importance. Perfect equality set the tone. But indeed there was no one present who was not very proud of being himself.

Mademoiselle des Touches always insists on her guests remaining at table till they leave, having frequently remarked the change which a move produces in the spirit of a party. Between the dining-room and the drawing-room the charm is destroyed. According to Sterne, the ideas of an author after shaving are different from those he had before. If Sterne is right, may it not

be boldly asserted that the frame of mind of a party at table is not the same as that of the same persons returned to the drawing-room? The atmosphere is not heady, the eye no longer contemplates the brilliant disorder of the dessert, lost are the happy effects of that laxness of mood, that benevolence which comes over us while we remain in the humour peculiar to the well-filled man, settled comfortably on one of the springy chairs which are made in these days. Perhaps we are more ready to talk face to face with the dessert and in the society of good wine, during the delightful interval when every one may sit with an elbow on the table and his head resting on his hand. Not only does every one like to talk then, but also to listen. Digestion, which is almost always attent, is loquacious or silent, as characters differ. Then every one finds his opportunity.

Was not this preamble necessary to make you know the charm of the narrative, by which a celebrated man, now dead, depicted the innocent jesuitry of woman, painting it with the subtlety peculiar to persons who have seen much of the world, and which makes statesmen such delightful story-tellers when, like Prince Talleyrand and Prince Metternich, they vouchsafe to tell a story?

De Marsay, prime minister for some six months, had already given proofs of superior capabilities. Those who had known him long were not indeed surprised to see him display all the talents and various aptitudes of a statesman; still it might yet be a question whether he would prove to be a solid politician, or had merely been moulded in the fire of circumstance. This question had just been asked by a man whom he had made préfet, a man of wit and observation, who had for a long time been a journalist, and who admired de Marsay without infusing into his admiration that dash of acrid criticism by which, in Paris, one superior man excuses himself from admiring another.

'Was there ever,' said he, 'in your former life, any event, any thought or wish which told you what your vocation was?' asked Emile Blondet; 'for we all, like Newton, have our apple, which falls and leads us to the spot where our faculties develop——'

'Yes,' said de Marsay; 'I will tell you about it.'

Pretty women, political dandies, artists, old men, de Marsay's intimate friends,—all settled themselves comfortably, each in his favourite attitude, to look at the Minister. Need it be said that the servants had left, that the doors were shut, and the curtains drawn over them? The silence was so complete that the murmurs of the coachmen's voices could be heard from the courtyard, and the pawing and champing made by horses when asking to be taken back to their stable.

'The statesman, my friends, exists by one single quality,' said the Minister, playing with his gold and mother-of-pearl dessert knife. 'To wit: the power of always being master of himself; of profiting more or less, under all circumstances, by every event, however fortuitous; in short, of having within himself a cold and disinterested other self, who looks on as a spectator at all the chances of life, noting our passions and our sentiments, and whispering to us in every case the judgment of a sort of moral ready-reckoner.

'That explains why a statesman is so rare a thing in France,' said old Lord Dudley.

'From a sentimental point of view, this is horrible,' the Minister went on. 'Hence, when such a phenomenon is seen in a young man—Richelieu, who, when warned overnight by a letter of Concini's peril, slept till midday, when his benefactor was to be killed at ten o'clock—or say Pitt, or Napoleon, he is a monster. I became such a monster at a very early age, thanks to a woman.'

'I fancied,' said Madame de Montcornet with a smile, 'that more politicians were undone by us than we could make.'

'The monster of which I speak is a monster just because he withstands you,' replied de Marsay, with a little ironical bow.

'If this is a love-story,' the Baronne de Nucingen interposed, 'I request that it may not be interrupted by any reflections.'

'Reflection is so antipathetic to it!' cried Joseph Bridau.

'I was seventeen,' de Marsay went on; 'the Restoration was being consolidated; my old friends know how impetuous and fervid I was then. I was in love for the first time, and I was—I may say so now—one of the handsomest young fellows in Paris. I had youth and good looks, two advantages due to good fortune, but of which we are all as proud as of a conquest. I must be silent as to the rest.—Like all youths, I was in love with a woman six years older than myself. No one of you here,' said he, looking carefully round the table, 'can suspect her name or recognise her. Ronquerolles alone, at the time, ever guessed my secret. He has kept it well, but I should have feared his smile. However, he is gone,' said the Minister, looking round.

'He would not stay to supper,' said Madame de Nucingen.

'For six months, possessed by my passion,' de Marsay went on, 'but incapable of suspecting that it had overmastered me, I had abandoned myself to that rapturous idolatry which is at once the triumph and the frail joy of the young. I treasured *her* old gloves; I drank an infusion of the flowers *she* had worn; I got out of bed at night to go and gaze at *her* window. All my blood rushed to my heart when I inhaled the perfume she used. I was miles away from knowing that woman is a stove with a marble casing.'

'Oh! spare us your terrible verdicts,' cried Madame de Montcornet with a smile.

'I believe I should have crushed with my scorn the

philosopher who first uttered this terrible but profoundly true thought,' said de Marsay. 'You are all far too keen-sighted for me to say any more on that point. These few words will remind you of your own follies.

'A great lady if ever there was one, a widow without children—oh! all was perfect—my idol would shut herself up to mark my linen with her hair; in short, she responded to my madness by her own. And how can we fail to believe in passion when it has the guarantee of madness?

'We each devoted all our minds to concealing a love so perfect and so beautiful from the eyes of the world; and we succeeded. And what charm we found in our escapades! Of her I will say nothing. She was perfection then, and to this day is considered one of the most beautiful women in Paris; but at that time a man would have endured death to win one of her glances. She had been left with an amount of fortune sufficient for a woman who loved and was adored; but the Restoration, to which she owed renewed lustre, made it seem inadequate in comparison with her name. In my position I was so fatuous as never to dream of a suspicion. Though my jealousy would have been of a hundred and twenty Othello-power, that terrible passion slumbered in me as gold in the nugget. I would have ordered my servant to thrash me if I had been so base as ever to doubt the purity of that angel—so fragile and so strong, so fair, so artless, pure, spotless, and whose blue eye allowed my gaze to sound it to the very depths of her heart with adorable submissiveness. Never was there the slightest hesitancy in her attitude, her look, or word; always white and fresh, and ready for the Beloved like the Oriental Lily of the "Song of Songs"! Ah! my friends!' sadly exclaimed the Minister, grown young again, 'a man must hit his head very hard on the marble to dispel that poem!'

This cry of nature, finding an echo in the listeners,

spurred the curiosity he had excited in them with so much skill.

'Every morning, riding Sultan—the fine horse you sent me from England,' de Marsay went on, addressing Lord Dudley, 'I rode past her open carriage, the horses' pace being intentionally reduced to a walk, and read the order of the day signalled to me by the flowers of her bouquet in case we were unable to exchange a few words. Though we saw each other almost every evening in society, and she wrote to me every day, to deceive the curious and mislead the observant we had adopted a scheme of conduct: never to look at each other; to avoid meeting; to speak ill of each other. Self-admiration, swagger, or playing the disdained swain,—all these old manœuvres are not to compare on either part with a false passion professed for an indifferent person and an air of indifference towards the true idol. If two lovers will only play that game, the world will always be deceived; but then they must be very secure of each other.

'Her stalking-horse was a man in high favour, a courtier, cold and sanctimonious, whom she never received at her own house. This little comedy was performed for the benefit of simpletons and drawing-room circles, who laughed at it. Marriage was never spoken of between us; six years' difference of age might give her pause; she knew nothing of my fortune, of which, on principle, I have always kept the secret. I, on my part, fascinated by her wit and manners, by the extent of her knowledge and her experience of the world, would have married her without a thought. At the same time, her reserve charmed me. If she had been the first to speak of marriage in a certain tone, I might perhaps have noted it as vulgar in that accomplished soul.

'Six months, full and perfect—a diamond of the purest water! That has been my portion of love in this base world.

'One morning, attacked by the feverish stiffness which

marks the beginning of a cold, I wrote her a line to put off one of these secret festivals which are buried under the roofs of Paris like pearls in the sea. No sooner was the letter sent than remorse seized me: she will not believe that I am ill! thought I. She was wont to affect jealousy and suspiciousness.—When jealousy is genuine,' said de Marsay, interrupting himself, 'it is the visible sign of an unique passion.'

'Why?' asked the Princess de Cadignan eagerly.

'Unique and true love,' said de Marsay, 'produces a sort of corporeal apathy attuned to the contemplation into which one falls. Then the mind complicates everything; it works on itself, pictures its fancies, turns them into reality and torment; and such jealousy is as delightful as it is distressing.'

A foreign minister smiled as, by the light of memory, he felt the truth of this remark.

'Besides,' de Marsay went on, 'I said to myself, why miss a happy hour? Was it not better to go, even though feverish? And, then, if she learns that I am ill, I believe her capable of hurrying here and compromising herself. I made an effort; I wrote a second letter, and carried it myself, for my confidential servant was now gone. The river lay between us. I had to cross Paris; but at last, within a suitable distance of her house, I caught sight of a messenger; I charged him to have the note sent up to her at once, and I had the happy idea of driving past her door in a hackney cab to see whether she might not by chance receive the two letters together. At the moment when I arrived it was two o'clock; the great gate opened to admit a carriage. Whose?—That of the stalking-horse!

'It is fifteen years since—well, even while I tell the tale, I, the exhausted orator, the Minister dried up by the friction of public business, I still feel a surging in my heart and the hot blood about my diaphragm. At the end of an hour I passed once more; the carriage was

still in the courtyard! My note no doubt was in the porter's hands. At last, at half-past three, the carriage drove out. I could observe my rival's expression; he was grave, and did not smile; but he was in love, and no doubt there was business in hand.

'I went to keep my appointment; the queen of my heart met me; I saw her calm, pure, serene. And here I must confess that I have always thought that Othello was not only stupid, but showed very bad taste. Only a man who is half a negro could behave so: indeed Shakespeare felt this when he called his play "The Moor of Venice." The sight of the woman we love is such a balm to the heart that it must dispel anguish, doubt, and sorrow. All my rage vanished. I could smile again. Hence this cheerfulness, which at my age now would be the most atrocious dissimulation, was the result of my youth and my love. My jealousy once buried, I had the power of observation. My ailing condition was evident; the horrible doubts that had fermented in me increased it. At last I found an opening for putting in these words: "You have had no one with you this morning?" making a pretext of the uneasiness I had felt in the fear lest she should have disposed of her time after receiving my first note.—"Ah!" she exclaimed, "only a man could have such ideas! As if I could think of anything but your suffering. Till the moment when I received your second note I could think only of how I could contrive to go to see you."—"And you were alone?"—"Alone," said she, looking at me with a face of innocence so perfect that it must have been his distrust of such a look as that which made the Moor kill Desdemona. As she lived alone in the house, the word was a fearful lie. One single lie destroys the absolute confidence which to some souls is the very foundation of happiness.

'To explain to you what passed in me at that moment it must be assumed that we have an internal self of which the exterior *I* is but the husk; that this self, as bril-

liant as light, is as fragile as a shade—well, that beautiful self was in me thenceforth for ever shrouded in crape. Yes; I felt a cold and fleshless hand cast over me the winding-sheet of experience, dooming me to the eternal mourning into which the first betrayal plunges the soul. As I cast my eyes down that she might not observe my dizziness, this proud thought somewhat restored my strength: "If she is deceiving you, she is unworthy of you!"

'I ascribed my sudden reddening and the tears which started to my eyes to an attack of pain, and the sweet creature insisted on driving me home with the blinds of the cab drawn. On the way she was full of a solicitude and tenderness that might have deceived the Moor of Venice whom I have taken as a standard of comparison. Indeed, if that great child were to hesitate two seconds longer, every intelligent spectator feels that he would ask Desdemona's forgiveness. Thus, killing the woman is the act of a boy.—She wept as we parted, so much was she distressed at being unable to nurse me herself. She wished she were my valet, in whose happiness she found a cause of envy, and all this was as elegantly expressed, oh! as Clarissa might have written in her happiness. There is always a precious ape in the prettiest and most angelic woman!'

At these words all the women looked down, as if hurt by this brutal truth so brutally stated.

'I will say nothing of the night, nor of the week I spent,' de Marsay went on. 'I discovered that I was a statesman.'

It was so well said that we all uttered an admiring exclamation.

'As I thought over the really cruel vengeance to be taken on a woman,' said de Marsay, continuing his story, 'with infernal ingenuity—for, as we had loved each other, some terrible and irreparable revenges were possible—I despised myself, I felt how common I was, I insensibly

formulated a horrible code—that of Indulgence. In taking vengeance on a woman, do we not in fact admit that there is but one for us, that we cannot do without her? And, then, is revenge the way to win her back? If she is not indispensable, if there are other women in the world, why not grant her the right to change which we assume?

'This, of course, applies only to passion; in any other sense it would be socially wrong. Nothing more clearly proves the necessity for indissoluble marriage than the instability of passion. The two sexes must be chained up, like wild beasts as they are, by inevitable law, deaf and mute. Eliminate revenge, and infidelity in love is nothing. Those who believe that for them there is but one woman in the world must be in favour of vengeance, and then there is but one form of it—that of Othello.

'Mine was different.'

The words produced in each of us the imperceptible movement which newspaper writers represent in Parliamentary reports by the words: *great sensation.*

'Cured of my cold, and of my pure, absolute, divine love, I flung myself into an adventure, of which the heroine was charming, and of a style of beauty utterly opposed to that of my deceiving angel. I took care not to quarrel with this clever woman, who was so good an actress, for I doubt whether true love can give such gracious delights as those lavished by such a dexterous fraud. Such refined hypocrisy is as good as virtue.—I am not speaking to you Englishwomen, my lady,' said the Minister suavely, addressing Lady Barimore, Lord Dudley's daughter. 'I tried to be the same lover.

'I wished to have some of my hair worked up for my new angel, and I went to a skilled artist who at that time dwelt in the Rue Boucher. The man had a monopoly of capillary keepsakes, and I mention his address for the benefit of those who have not much hair; he has plenty of every kind and every colour. After I

had explained my order, he showed me his work. I then saw achievements of patience surpassing those which the story books ascribe to fairies, or which are executed by prisoners. He brought me up to date as to the caprices and fashions governing the use of hair. "For the last year," said he, "there has been a rage for marking linen with hair; happily I had a fine collection of hair and skilled needlewomen."—On hearing this a suspicion flashed upon me; I took out my handkerchief and said, "So this was done in your shop, with false hair?"—He looked at the handkerchief, and said, "Ay! that lady was very particular, she insisted on verifying the tint of the hair. My wife herself marked those handkerchiefs. You have there, sir, one of the finest pieces of work we have ever executed." Before this last ray of light I might have believed something—might have taken a woman's word. I left the shop still having faith in pleasure, but where love was concerned I was as atheistical as a mathematician.

'Two months later I was sitting by the side of the ethereal being in her boudoir, on her sofa; I was holding one of her hands—they were very beautiful—and we scaled the Alps of sentiment, culling their sweetest flowers, and pulling off the daisy-petals; there is always a moment when one pulls daisies to pieces, even if it is in a drawing-room and there are no daisies. At the intensest moment of tenderness, and when we are most in love, love is so well aware of its own short duration that we are irresistibly urged to ask, "Do you love me? Will you love me always?" I seized the elegiac moment, so warm, so flowery, so full-blown, to lead her to tell her most delightful lies, in the enchanting language of rapturous exaggeration and high-flown poetry peculiar to love. Charlotte displayed her choicest allurements: She could not live without me; I was to her the only man in the world; she feared to weary me, because my presence bereft her of all her wits; with me

all her faculties were lost in love; she was indeed too tender to escape alarms; for the last six months she had been seeking some way to bind me to her eternally, and God alone knew that secret; in short, I was her god!'

The women who heard de Marsay seemed offended by seeing themselves so well acted, for he seconded the words by airs, and sidelong attitudes, and mincing grimaces which were quite illusory.

'At the very moment when I might have believed these adorable falsehoods, as I still held her right hand in mine, I said to her, "When are you to marry the Duke?"

'The thrust was so direct, my gaze met hers so boldly, and her hand lay so tightly in mine, that her start, slight as it was, could not be disguised; her eyes fell before mine, and a faint blush coloured her cheeks.—"The Duke! What do you mean?" she said, affecting great astonishment.—"I know everything," replied I; "and in my opinion, you should delay no longer; he is rich; he is a duke; but he is more than devout, he is religious! I am sure, therefore, that you have been faithful to me, thanks to his scruples. You cannot imagine how urgently necessary it is that you should compromise him with himself and with God; short of that you will never bring him to the point."—"Is this a dream?" said she, pushing her hair from her forehead, fifteen years before Malibran, with the gesture which Malibran has made so famous.—"Come, do not be childish, my angel," said I, trying to take her hands; but she folded them before her with a little prudish and indignant mien.—"Marry him, you have my permission," said I, replying to this gesture by using the formal *vous* instead of *tu*. "Nay, better, I beg you to do so."—"But," cried she, falling at my knees, "there is some horrible mistake; I love no one in the world but you; you may demand any proofs you please."—"Rise, my dear," said I, "and do me the honour of being truthful."—"As before God."—"Do

you doubt my love?"—"No."—"Nor my fidelity?"—"No."—"Well, I have committed the greatest crime," I went on. "I have doubted your love and your fidelity. Between two intoxications I looked calmly about me."—"Calmly!" sighed she. "That is enough, Henri; you no longer love me."

'She had at once found, you perceive, a loophole for escape. In scenes like these an adverb is dangerous. But, happily, curiosity made her add: "And what did you see? Have I ever spoken of the Duke excepting in public? Have you detected in my eyes——?"—"No," said I, "but in his. And you have eight times made me go to Saint-Thomas d'Aquin to see you listening to the same mass as he."—"Ah!" she exclaimed, "then I have made you jealous!"—"Oh! I only wish I could be!" said I, admiring the pliancy of her quick intelligence, and these acrobatic feats which can only be successful in the eyes of the blind. "But by dint of going to church I have become very incredulous. On the day of my first cold, and your first treachery, when you thought I was in bed, you received the Duke, and you told me you had seen no one."—"Do you know that your conduct is infamous?"—"In what respect? I consider your marriage to the Duke an excellent arrangement; he gives you a great name, the only rank that suits you, a brilliant and distinguished position. You will be one of the queens of Paris. I should be doing you a wrong if I placed any obstacle in the way of this prospect, this distinguished life, this splendid alliance. Ah! Charlotte, some day you will do me justice by discovering how unlike my character is to that of other young men. You would have been compelled to deceive me; yes, you would have found it very difficult to break with me, for he watches you. It is time that we should part, for the Duke is rigidly virtuous. You must turn prude; I advise you to do so. The Duke is vain; he will be proud of his wife."—"Oh!" cried she, bursting

into tears, "Henri, if only you had spoken! Yes, if you had chosen"—it was I who was to blame, you understand—"we would have gone to live all our days in a corner, married, happy, and defied the world."—"Well, it is too late now," said I, kissing her hands, and putting on a victimised air.—"Good God! But I can undo it all!" said she.—"No, you have gone too far with the Duke. I ought indeed to go a journey to part us more effectually. We should both have reason to fear our own affection——"—"Henri, do you think the Duke has any suspicions?" I was still "Henri," but the *tu* was lost for ever.—"I do not think so," I replied, assuming the manner of a friend; "but be as devout as possible, reconcile yourself to God, for the Duke waits for proofs; he hesitates, you must bring him to the point."

'She rose, and walked twice round the boudoir in real or affected agitation; then she no doubt found an attitude and a look beseeming the new state of affairs, for she stopped in front of me, held out her hand, and said in a voice broken by emotion, "Well, Henri, you are loyal, noble, and a charming man; I shall never forget you."

'These were admirable tactics. She was bewitching in this transition of feeling, indispensable to the situation in which she wished to place herself in regard to me. I fell into the attitude, the manners, and the look of a man so deeply distressed, that I saw her too newly assumed dignity giving way; she looked at me, took my hand, drew me along almost, threw me on to the sofa, but quite gently, and said after a moment's silence, "I am dreadfully unhappy, my dear fellow. Do you love me?"—"Oh! yes."—"Well, then, what will become of you?"'

At this point the women all looked at each other.

'Though I can still suffer when I recall her perfidy, I still laugh at her expression of entire conviction and sweet

satisfaction that I must die, or at any rate sink into perpetual melancholy,' de Marsay went on. 'Oh! do not laugh yet!' he said to his listeners; 'there is better to come. I looked at her very tenderly after a pause, and said to her, "Yes, that is what I have been wondering." —"Well, what will you do?"—"I asked myself that the day after my cold."—"And——?" she asked with eager anxiety.—"And I have made advances to the little lady to whom I was supposed to be attached."

'Charlotte started up from the sofa like a frightened doe, trembling like a leaf, gave me one of those looks in which women forgo all their dignity, all their modesty, their refinement, and even their grace, the sparkling glitter of a hunted viper's eye when driven into a corner, and said, "And I have loved this man! I have struggled! I have——" On this last thought, which I leave you to guess, she made the most impressive pause I ever heard.—"Good God!" she cried, "how unhappy are we women! we never can be loved. To you there is nothing serious in the purest feelings. But never mind; when you cheat us you still are our dupes!"—"I see that plainly," said I, with a stricken air; "you have far too much wit in your anger for your heart to suffer from it."—This modest epigram increased her rage; she found some tears of vexation. "You disgust me with the world and with life," she said; "you snatch away all my illusions; you deprave my heart."

'She said to me all that I had a right to say to her, and with a simple effrontery, an artless audacity, which would certainly have nailed any man but me on the spot. —"What is to become of us poor women in a state of society such as Louis XVIII.'s charter has made it?"—(Imagine how her words had run away with her.)—"Yes, indeed, we are born to suffer. In matters of passion we are always superior to you, and you are beneath all loyalty. There is no honesty in your hearts. To you love is a game in which you always cheat."—

"My dear," said I, "to take anything serious in society nowadays would be like making romantic love to an actress."—"What a shameless betrayal! It was deliberately planned!"—"No, only a rational issue."—"Good-bye, Monsieur de Marsay," said she; "you have deceived me horribly."—"Surely," I replied, taking up a submissive attitude, "Madame la Duchesse will not remember Charlotte's grievances?"—"Certainly," she answered bitterly.—"Then, in fact, you hate me?"—She bowed, and I said to myself, "There is something still left!"

'The feeling she had when I parted from her allowed her to believe that she still had something to avenge. Well, my friends, I have carefully studied the lives of men who have had great success with women, but I do not believe that the Maréchal de Richelieu, or Lauzun, or Louis de Valois ever effected a more judicious retreat at the first attempt. As to my mind and heart, they were cast in a mould then and there, once for all, and the power of control I thus acquired over the thoughtless impulses which make us commit so many follies gained me the admirable presence of mind you all know.'

'How deeply I pity the second!' exclaimed the Baronne de Nucingen.

A scarcely perceptible smile on de Marsay's pale lips made Delphine de Nucingen colour.

'How we do forget!' said the Baron de Nucingen.

The great banker's simplicity was so extremely droll, that his wife, who was de Marsay's 'second,' could not help laughing like every one else.

'You are all ready to condemn the woman,' said Lady Dudley. 'Well, I quite understand that she did not regard her marriage as an act of inconstancy. Men will never distinguish between constancy and fidelity.—I know the woman whose story Monsieur de Marsay has told us, and she is one of the last of your truly great ladies.'

'Alas! my lady, you are right,' replied de Marsay. 'For very nearly fifty years we have been looking on at the progressive ruin of all social distinctions. We ought to have saved our women from this great wreck, but the Civil Code has swept its levelling influence over their heads. However terrible the words, they must be spoken: Duchesses are vanishing, and marquises too! As to the baronesses—I must apologise to Madame de Nucingen, who will become a countess when her husband is made a peer of France—baronesses have never succeeded in getting people to take them seriously.'

'Aristocracy begins with the viscountess,' said Blondet with a smile.

'Countesses will survive,' said de Marsay. 'An elegant woman will be more or less of a countess—a countess of the Empire or of yesterday, a countess of the old block, or, as they say in Italy, a countess by courtesy. But as to the great lady, she died out with the dignified splendour of the last century, with powder, patches, high-heeled slippers, and stiff bodices with a delta stomacher of bows. Duchesses in these days can pass through a door without any need to widen it for their hoops. The Empire saw the last of gowns with trains! I am still puzzled to understand how a sovereign who wished to see his drawing-room swept by ducal satin and velvet did not make indestructible laws. Napoleon never guessed the results of the Code he was so proud of. That man, by creating duchesses, founded the race of our "ladies" of to-day—the indirect offspring of his legislation.'

'It was logic, handled as a hammer by boys just out of school and by obscure journalists, which demolished the splendours of the social state,' said the Comte de Vandenesse. 'In these days every rogue who can hold his head straight in his collar, cover his manly bosom with half an ell of satin by way of a cuirass, display a brow where apocryphal genius gleams under curling

locks, and strut in a pair of patent-leather pumps graced by silk socks which cost six francs, screws his eyeglass into one of his eye-sockets by puckering up his cheek, and whether he be an attorney's clerk, a contractor's son, or a banker's bastard, he stares impertinently at the prettiest duchess, appraises her as she walks downstairs, and says to his friend—dressed by Buisson, as we all are, and mounted in patent-leather like any duke himself—"There, my boy, that is a perfect lady."'

'You have not known how to form a party,' said Lord Dudley; 'it will be a long time yet before you have a policy. You talk a great deal in France about organising labour, and you have not yet organised property. So this is what happens: Any duke—and even in the time of Louis XVIII. and Charles X. there were some left who had two hundred thousand francs a year, a magnificent residence, and a sumptuous train of servants—well, such a duke could live like a great lord. The last of these great gentlemen in France was the Prince de Talleyrand.—This duke leaves four children, two of them girls. Granting that he has great luck in marrying them all well, each of these descendants will have but sixty or eighty thousand francs a year now; each is the father or mother of children, and consequently obliged to live with the strictest economy in a flat on the ground floor or first floor of a large house. Who knows if they may not even be hunting a fortune? Henceforth the eldest son's wife, a duchess in name only, has no carriage, no people, no opera-box, no time to herself. She has not her own rooms in the family mansion, nor her fortune, nor her pretty toys; she is buried in marriage as a wife in the Rue Saint-Denis is buried in trade; she buys socks for her dear little children, nurses them herself, and keeps an eye on her girls, whom she no longer sends to school at a convent. Thus your noblest dames have been turned into worthy brood-hens.'

'Alas! it is true,' said Joseph Bridau. 'In our day

we cannot show those beautiful flowers of womanhood which graced the golden ages of the French Monarchy. The great lady's fan is broken. A woman has nothing now to blush for ; she need not slander or whisper, hide her face or reveal it. A fan is of no use now but for fanning herself. When once a thing is no more than what it is, it is too useful to be a form of luxury.'

'Everything in France has aided and abetted the "perfect lady,"' said Daniel d'Arthez. 'The aristocracy has acknowledged her by retreating to the recesses of its landed estates, where it has hidden itself to die—emigrating inland before the march of ideas, as of old to foreign lands before that of the masses. The women who could have founded European *salons*, could have guided opinion and turned it inside out like a glove, could have ruled the world by ruling the men of art or of intellect who ought to have ruled it, have committed the blunder of abandoning their ground ; they were ashamed of having to fight against the citizen class drunk with power, and rushing out on to the stage of the world, there to be cut to pieces perhaps by the barbarians who are at its heels. Hence, where the middle class insist on seeing princesses, these are really only ladylike young women. In these days princes can find no great ladies whom they may compromise ; they cannot even confer honour on a woman taken up at random. The Duc de Bourbon was the last prince to avail himself of this privilege.'

'And God alone knows how dearly he paid for it!' said Lord Dudley.

'Nowadays, princes have lady-like wives, obliged to share their opera-box with other ladies ; royal favour could not raise them higher by a hair's-breadth ; they glide unremarkable between the waters of the citizen class and those of the nobility—not altogether noble nor altogether *bourgeoises*,' said the Marquise de Rochegude acridly.

'The press has fallen heir to the Woman,' exclaimed Rastignac. 'She no longer has the quality of a spoken *feuilleton* — delightful calumnies graced by elegant language. We read *feuilletons* written in a dialect which changes every three years, society papers about as mirthful as an undertaker's mute, and as light as the lead of their type. French conversation is carried on from one end of the country to the other in a revolutionary jargon, through long columns of type printed in old mansions where a press groans in the place where formerly elegant company used to meet.'

'The knell of the highest society is tolling,' said a Russian Prince. 'Do you hear it? And the first stroke is your modern word *lady*.'

'You are right, Prince,' said de Marsay. 'The "perfect lady," issuing from the ranks of the nobility, or sprouting from the citizen class, and the product of every soil, even of the provinces, is the expression of these times, a last remaining embodiment of good taste, grace, wit, and distinction, all combined, but dwarfed. We shall see no more great ladies in France, but there will be "ladies" for a long time, elected by public opinion to form an Upper Chamber of women, and who will be among the fair sex what a "gentleman" is in England.

'And that they call progress!' exclaimed Mademoiselle des Touches. 'I should like to know where the progress lies.'

'Why, in this,' said Madame de Nucingen. 'Formerly a woman might have the voice of a fish-seller, the walk of a grenadier, the face of an impudent courtesan, her hair too high on her forehead, a large foot, a thick hand—she was a great lady in spite of it all; but in these days, even if she were a Montmorency—if a Montmorency would ever be such a creature—she would not be a lady.'

'But what do you mean by a "perfect lady"?' asked Count Adam Laginski.

'She is a modern product, a deplorable triumph of the elective system as applied to the fair sex,' said the Minister. 'Every revolution has a word of its own which epitomises and depicts it.'

'You are right,' said the Russian, who had come to make a literary reputation in Paris. 'The explanation of certain words added from time to time to your beautiful language would make a magnificent history. *Organise*, for instance, is the word of the Empire, and sums up Napoleon completely.'

'But all that does not explain what is meant by a lady!' the young Pole exclaimed, with some impatience.

'Well, I will tell you,' said Emile Blondet to Count Adam. 'One fine morning you go for a saunter in Paris. It is past two, but five has not yet struck. You see a woman coming towards you; your first glance at her is like the preface to a good book, it leads you to expect a world of elegance and refinement. Like a botanist over hill and dale in his pursuit of plants, among the vulgarities of Paris life you have at last found a rare flower. This woman is attended by two very distinguished-looking men, of whom one, at any rate, wears an order; or else a servant out of livery follows her at a distance of ten yards. She displays no gaudy colours, no open-worked stockings, no over-elaborate waist-buckle, no embroidered frills to her drawers fussing round her ankles. You will see that she is shod with prunella shoes, with sandals crossed over extremely fine cotton stockings, or plain grey silk stockings; or perhaps she wears boots of the most exquisite simplicity. You notice that her gown is made of a neat and inexpensive material, but made in a way that surprises more than one woman of the middle class; it is almost always a long pelisse, with bows to fasten it, and neatly bound with fine cord or an imperceptible braid. The Unknown has a way of her own in wrapping herself in her shawl or mantilla; she knows how to draw it round her from her

hips to her neck, outlining a carapace, as it were, which would make an ordinary woman look like a turtle, but which in her sets off the most beautiful forms while concealing them. How does she do it? This secret she keeps, though unguarded by any patent.

'As she walks she gives herself a little concentric and harmonious twist, which makes her supple or dangerous slenderness writhe under the stuff, as a snake does under the green gauze of trembling grass. Is it to an angel or a devil that she owes the graceful undulation which plays under her long black silk cape, stirs its lace frill, sheds an airy balm, and what I should like to call the breeze of a Parisienne? You may recognise over her arms, round her waist, about her throat, a science of drapery recalling the antique Mnemosyne.

'Oh! how thoroughly she understands the *cut* of her gait—forgive the expression. Study the way she puts her foot forward, moulding her skirt with such a decent preciseness that the passer-by is filled with admiration, mingled with desire, but subdued by deep respect. When an Englishwoman attempts this step, she looks like a grenadier marching forward to attack a redoubt. The women of Paris have a genius for walking. The municipality really owed them asphalte foot-walks.

'Our Unknown jostles no one. If she wants to pass, she waits with proud humility till some one makes way. The distinction peculiar to a well-bred woman betrays itself, especially in the way she holds her shawl or cloak crossed over her bosom. Even as she walks she has a little air of serene dignity, like Raphael's Madonnas in their frames. Her aspect, at once quiet and disdainful, makes the most insolent dandy step aside for her.

'Her bonnet, remarkable for its simplicity, is trimmed with crisp ribbons; there may be flowers in it, but the cleverest of such women wear only bows. Feathers demand a carriage; flowers are too showy. Beneath it you see the fresh unworn face of a woman who, without

conceit, is sure of herself; who looks at nothing, and sees everything; whose vanity, satiated by being constantly gratified, stamps her face with an indifference which piques your curiosity. She knows that she is looked at, she knows that everybody, even women, turn round to see her again. And she threads her way through Paris like a gossamer, spotless and pure.

'This delightful species affects the hottest latitudes, the cleanest longitudes of Paris; you will meet her between the 10th and 110th Arcade of the Rue de Rivoli; along the line of the Boulevards from the equator of the Passage des Panoramas, where the products of India flourish, where the warmest creations of industry are displayed, to the Cape of the Madeleine; in the least muddy districts of the citizen quarters, between No. 30 and No. 130 of the Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré. During the winter, she haunts the terrace of the Feuillants, but not the asphalte pavement that lies parallel. According to the weather, she may be seen flying in the Avenue of the Champs-Elysées, which is bounded on the east by the Place Louis XV., on the west by the Avenue de Marigny, to the south by the road, to the north by the gardens of the Faubourg Saint-Honoré. Never is this pretty variety of woman to be seen in the hyperborean regions of the Rue Saint-Denis, never in the Kamtschatka of miry, narrow, commercial streets; never anywhere in bad weather. These flowers of Paris, blooming only in Oriental weather, perfume the highways; and after five o'clock fold up like morning-glory flowers. The women you will see later, looking a little like them, trying to ape them, are would-be ladies; while the fair Unknown, your Beatrice of a day, is a "perfect lady."

'It is not very easy for a foreigner, my dear Count, to recognise the differences by which the observer *emeritus* distinguishes them — women are such consummate actresses; but they are glaring in the eyes of Parisians: hooks ill fastened, strings showing loops of rusty-white

tape through a gaping slit in the back, rubbed shoe-leather, ironed bonnet-strings, an over-full skirt, an over-tight waist. You will see a certain effort in the intentional droop of the eyelid. There is something conventional in the attitude.

'As to the *bourgeoise*, the citizen womankind, she cannot possibly be mistaken for the lady; she is an admirable foil to her, she accounts for the spell cast over you by the Unknown. She is bustling, and goes out in all weathers, trots about, comes, goes, gazes, does not know whether she will or will not go into a shop. Where the lady knows just what she wants and what she is doing, the townswoman is undecided, tucks up her skirts to cross a gutter, dragging a child by the hand, which compels her to look out for the vehicles; she is a mother in public, and talks to her daughter; she carries money in her bag, and has open-work stockings on her feet; in winter, she wears a boa over her fur cloak; in summer, a shawl and a scarf; she is accomplished in the redundancies of dress.

'You will meet the fair Unknown again at the Italiens, at the Opera, at a ball. She will then appear under such a different aspect that you would think them two beings devoid of any analogy. The woman has emerged from those mysterious garments like a butterfly from its silky cocoon. She serves up, like some rare dainty, to your ravished eyes, the forms which her bodice scarcely revealed in the morning. At the theatre she never mounts higher than the second tier, excepting at the Italiens. You can there watch at your leisure the studied deliberateness of her movements. The enchanting deceiver plays off all the little political artifices of her sex so naturally as to exclude all idea of art or premeditation. If she has a royally beautiful hand, the most perspicacious beholder will believe that it is absolutely necessary that she should twist, or refix, or push aside the ringlet or curl she plays with. If she has some dignity of profile, you will be

persuaded that she is giving irony or grace to what she says to her neighbour, sitting in such a position as to produce the magical effect of the "lost profile," so dear to great painters, by which the cheek catches the high light, the nose is shown in clear outline, the nostrils are transparently rosy, the forehead squarely modelled, the eye has its spangle of fire, but fixed on space, and the white roundness of the chin is accentuated by a line of light. If she has a pretty foot, she will throw herself on a sofa with the coquettish grace of a cat in the sunshine, her feet outstretched without your feeling that her attitude is anything but the most charming model ever given to a sculptor by lassitude.

'Only the perfect lady is quite at her ease in full dress; nothing inconveniences her. You will never see her, like the woman of the citizen class, pulling up a refractory shoulder-strap, or pushing down a rebellious whalebone, or looking whether her tucker is doing its office of faithful guardian to two treasures of dazzling whiteness, or glancing in the mirrors to see if her head-dress is keeping its place. Her toilet is always in harmony with her character; she has had time to study herself, to learn what becomes her, for she has long known what does not suit her. You will not find her as you go out; she vanishes before the end of the play. If by chance she is to be seen, calm and stately, on the stairs, she is experiencing some violent emotion; she has to bestow a glance, to receive a promise. Perhaps she goes down so slowly on purpose to gratify the vanity of a slave whom she sometimes obeys. If your meeting takes place at a ball or an evening party, you will gather the honey, natural or affected, of her insinuating voice; her empty words will enchant you, and she will know how to give them the value of thought by her inimitable bearing.'

'To be such a woman, is it not necessary to be very clever?' asked the Polish Count.

'It is necessary to have great taste,' replied the Princesse de Cadignan.

'And in France taste is more than cleverness,' said the Russian.

'This woman's cleverness is the triumph of a purely plastic art,' Blondet went on. 'You will not know what she said, but you will be fascinated. She will toss her head, or gently shrug her white shoulders; she will gild an insignificant speech with a charming pout and smile; or throw a Voltairean epigram into an "Indeed!" an "Ah!" a "What then!" A jerk of her head will be her most pertinent form of questioning; she will give meaning to the movement by which she twirls a vinaigrette hanging to her finger by a ring. She gets an artificial grandeur out of superlative trivialities; she simply drops her hand impressively, letting it fall over the arm of her chair as dewdrops hang on the cup of a flower, and all is said—she has pronounced judgment beyond appeal, to the apprehension of the most obtuse. She knows how to listen to you; she gives you the opportunity of shining, and—I ask your modesty—those moments are rare?'

The candid simplicity of the young Pole, to whom Blondet spoke, made all the party shout with laughter.

'Now, you will not talk for half-an-hour with a *bourgeoise* without her alluding to her husband in one way or another,' Blondet went on with unperturbed gravity; 'whereas, even if you know that your lady is married, she will have the delicacy to conceal her husband so effectually that it will need the enterprise of Christopher Columbus to discover him. Often you will fail in the attempt single-handed. If you have had no opportunity of inquiring, towards the end of the evening you detect her gazing fixedly at a middle-aged man wearing a decoration, who bows and goes out. She has ordered her carriage, and goes.

'You are not the rose, but you have been with the

rose, and you go to bed under the golden canopy of a delicious dream, which will last perhaps after Sleep, with his heavy finger, has opened the ivory gates of the temple of dreams.

'The lady, when she is at home, sees no one before four; she is shrewd enough always to keep you waiting. In her house you will find everything in good taste; her luxury is for hourly use, and duly renewed; you will see nothing under glass shades, no rags of wrappings hanging about, and looking like a pantry. You will find the staircase warmed. Flowers on all sides will charm your sight—flowers, the only gift she accepts, and those only from certain people, for nosegays live but a day; they give pleasure, and must be replaced; to her they are, as in the East, a symbol and a promise. The costly toys of fashion lie about, but not so as to suggest a museum or a curiosity shop. You will find her sitting by the fire in a low chair, from which she will not rise to greet you. Her talk will not now be what it was at the ball; there she was our creditor; in her own home she owes you the pleasure of her wit. These are the shades of which the lady is a marvellous mistress. What she likes in you is a man to swell her circle, an object for the cares and attentions which such women are now happy to bestow. Therefore, to attract you to her drawing-room, she will be bewitchingly charming. This especially is where you feel how isolated women are nowadays, and why they want a little world of their own, to which they may seem a constellation. Conversation is impossible without generalities.'

'Yes,' said de Marsay, 'you have truly hit the fault of our age. The epigram—a volume in a word—no longer strikes, as it did in the eighteenth century, at persons or at things, but at squalid events, and it dies in a day.'

'Hence,' said Blondet, 'the intelligence of the lady, if she has any, consists in casting doubts on everything, while the *bourgeoise* uses hers to affirm everything. Here

lies the great difference between the two women; the townswoman is certainly virtuous; the lady does not know yet whether she is, or whether she always will be; she hesitates and struggles where the other refuses point blank and falls full length. This hesitancy in everything is one of the last graces left to her by our horrible times. She rarely goes to church, but she will talk to you of religion; and if you have the good taste to affect Free-thought, she will try to convert you, for you will have opened a way for the stereotyped phrases, the head-shaking and gestures understood by all these women: "For shame! I thought you had too much sense to attack religion. Society is tottering, and you deprive it of its support. Why, religion at this moment means you and me; it is property, and the future of our children! Ah! let us not be selfish! Individualism is the disease of the age, and religion is the only remedy; it unites families which your laws put asunder," and so forth. Then she plunges into some neo-Christian speech sprinkled with political notions which is neither Catholic nor Protestant —but moral? Oh! deuced moral!—in which you may recognise a fag end of every material woven by modern doctrines, at loggerheads together.'

The women could not help laughing at the airs by which Blondet illustrated his satire.

'This explanation, dear Count Adam,' said Blondet, turning to the Pole, 'will have proved to you that the "perfect lady" represents the intellectual no less than the political muddle, just as she is surrounded by the showy and not very lasting products of an industry which is always aiming at destroying its work in order to replace it by something else. When you leave her you say to yourself: She certainly has superior ideas! And you believe it all the more because she will have sounded your heart with a delicate touch, and have asked you your secrets; she affects ignorance, to learn everything; there are some things she never knows, not

even when she knows them. You alone will be uneasy, you will know nothing of the state of her heart. The great ladies of old flaunted their love-affairs, with newspapers and advertisements; in these days the lady has her little passion neatly ruled like a sheet of music with its crotchets and quavers and minims, its rests, its pauses, its sharps to sign the key. A mere weak woman, she is anxious not to compromise her love, or her husband, or the future of her children. Name, position, and fortune are no longer flags so respected as to protect all kinds of merchandise on board. The whole aristocracy no longer advances in a body to screen the lady. She has not, like the great lady of the past, the demeanour of lofty antagonism; she can crush nothing under foot, it is she who would be crushed. Thus she is apt at Jesuitical *mezzo termine*, she is a creature of equivocal compromises, of guarded proprieties, of anonymous passions steered between two reef-bound shores. She is as much afraid of her servants as an Englishwoman who lives in dread of a trial in the divorce-court. This woman—so free at a ball, so attractive out walking—is a slave at home; she is never independent but in perfect privacy, or theoretically. She must preserve herself in her position as a lady. This is her task.

'For in our day a woman repudiated by her husband, reduced to a meagre allowance, with no carriage, no luxury, no opera-box, none of the divine accessories of the toilet, is no longer a wife, a maid, or a townswoman; she is adrift, and becomes a chattel. The Carmelites will not receive a married woman; it would be bigamy. Would her lover still have anything to say to her? That is the question. Thus your perfect lady may perhaps give occasion to calumny, never to slander.'

'It is all horribly true,' said the Princesse de Cadignan.

'And so,' said Blondet, 'our "perfect lady" lives between English hypocrisy and the delightful frankness

of the eighteenth century—a bastard system, symptomatic of an age in which nothing that grows up is at all like the thing that has vanished, in which transition leads nowhere, everything is a matter of degree; all the great figures shrink into the background, and distinction is purely personal. I am fully convinced that it is impossible for a woman, even if she were born close to a throne, to acquire before the age of five-and-twenty the encyclopædic knowledge of trifles, the practice of manœuvring, the important small things, the musical tones and harmony of colouring, the angelic bedevilments and innocent cunning, the speech and the silence, the seriousness and the banter, the wit and the obtuseness, the diplomacy and the ignorance which make up the perfect lady.'

'And where, in accordance with the sketch you have drawn,' said Mademoiselle des Touches to Emile Blondet, 'would you class the female author? Is she a perfect lady, a woman *comme il faut*?'

'When she has no genius, she is a woman *comme il n'en faut pas*,' Blondet replied, emphasising the words with a stolen glance, which might make them seem praise frankly addressed to Camille Maupin. 'This epigram is not mine, but Napoleon's,' he added.

'You need not owe Napoleon any grudge on that score,' said Canalis, with an emphatic tone and gesture. 'It was one of his weaknesses to be jealous of literary genius—for he had his mean points. Who will ever explain, depict, or understand Napoleon? A man represented with his arms folded, and who did everything, who was the greatest force ever known, the most concentrated, the most mordant, the most acid of all forces; a singular genius who carried armed civilisation in every direction without fixing it anywhere; a man who could do everything because he willed everything; a prodigious phenomenon of will, conquering an illness by a battle, and yet doomed to die of disease in bed after living in the midst

of ball and bullets; a man with a code and a sword in his brain, word and deed; a clear-sighted spirit that foresaw everything but his own fall; a capricious politician who risked men by handfuls out of economy, and who spared three heads—those of Talleyrand, of Pozzo di Borgo, and of Metternich, diplomatists whose death would have saved the French Empire, and who seemed to him of greater weight than thousands of soldiers; a man to whom nature, as a rare privilege, had given a heart in a frame of bronze; mirthful and kind at midnight amid women, and next morning manipulating Europe as a young girl might amuse herself by splashing the water in her bath! Hypocritical and generous; loving tawdriness and simplicity; devoid of taste, but protecting the arts; and in spite of these antitheses, really great in everything by instinct or by temperament; Cæsar at five-and-twenty, Cromwell at thirty; and then, like my grocer buried in Père Lachaise, a good husband and a good father. In short, he improvised public works, empires, kings, codes, verses, a romance—and all with more range than precision. Did he not aim at making all Europe France? And after making us weigh on the earth in such a way as to change the laws of gravitation, he left us poorer than on the day when he first laid hands on us; while he, who had taken an empire by his name, lost his name on the frontier of his empire in a sea of blood and soldiers. A man all thought and all action, who comprehended Desaix and Fouché.'

'All despotism and all justice at the right moments. The true king!' said de Marsay.

'Ah! vat a pleashre it is to dichest vile you talk,' said Baron de Nucingen.

'But do you suppose that the treat we are giving you is a common one?' asked Joseph Bridau. 'If you had to pay for the charms of conversation as you do for those of dancing or of music, your fortune would be inade-

quate! There is no second performance of the same flash of wit.'

'And are we really so much deteriorated as these gentlemen think?' said the Princesse de Cadignan, addressing the women with a smile at once sceptical and ironical. 'Because, in these days, under a régime which makes everything small, you prefer small dishes, small rooms, small pictures, small articles, small newspapers, small books, does that prove that women too have grown smaller? Why should the human heart change because you change your coat? In all ages the passions will remain the same. I know cases of beautiful devotion, of sublime sufferings, which lack the publicity—the glory, if you choose—which formerly gave lustre to the errors of some women. But though one may not have saved a King of France, one is not the less an Agnes Sorel. Do you believe that our dear Marquise d'Espard is not the peer of Madame Doublet, or Madame du Deffant, in whose rooms so much evil was spoken and done? Is not Taglioni a match for Camargo? or Malibran the equal of Saint-Huberti? Are not our poets superior to those of the eighteenth century? If at this moment, through the fault of the Grocers who govern us, we have not a style of our own, had not the Empire its distinguishing stamp as the age of Louis XV. had, and was not its splendour fabulous? Have the sciences lost anything?'

'I am quite of your opinion, Madame; the women of this age are truly great,' replied the Comte de Vandenesse. 'When posterity shall have followed us, will not Madame Récamier appear in proportions as fine as those of the most beautiful women of the past? We have made so much history that historians will be lacking! The age of Louis XIV. had but one Madame de Sévigné; we have a thousand now in Paris who certainly write better than she did, and who do not publish their letters. Whether the Frenchwoman be called "perfect lady" or great lady, she will always be *the* woman among women.

'Emile Blondet has given us a picture of the fascinations of a woman of the day; but, at need, this creature who bridles or shows off, who chirps out the ideas of Mr. This and Mr. That, would be heroic. And it must be said, your faults, Mesdames, are all the more poetical, because they must always and under all circumstances be surrounded by greater perils. I have seen much of the world, I have studied it perhaps too late; but in cases where the illegality of your feelings might be excused, I have always observed the effects of I know not what chance—which you may call Providence—inevitably overwhelming such as we consider light women.'

'I hope,' said Madame de Vandenesse, 'that we can be great in other ways——'

'Oh, let the Comte de Vandenesse preach to us!' exclaimed Madame de Sérizy.

'With all the more reason because he has preached a great deal by example,' said the Baronne de Nucingen.

'On my honour!' said General de Montriveau, 'in all the dramas—a word you are very fond of,' he said, looking at Blondet—'in which the finger of God has been visible, the most frightful I ever knew was very near being by my act——'

'Well, tell us all about it!' cried Lady Barimore; 'I love to shudder!'

'It is the taste of a virtuous woman,' replied de Marsay, looking at Lord Dudley's lovely daughter.

'During the campaign of 1812,' General de Montriveau began, 'I was the involuntary cause of a terrible disaster which may be of use to you, Doctor Bianchon,' he, turning to me, 'since, while devoting yourself to the human body, you concern yourself a good deal with the mind; it may tend to solve some of the problems of the will.

'I was going through my second campaign; I enjoyed danger, and laughed at everything, like the young and foolish lieutenant of artillery that I was. When we

reached the Beresina, the army had, as you know, lost all discipline, and had forgotten military obedience. It was a medley of men of all nations, instinctively making their way from north to south. The soldiers would drive a general in rags and bare-foot away from their fire if he brought neither wood nor victuals. After the passage of this famous river disorder did not diminish. I had come quietly and alone, without food, out of the marshes of Zembin, and was wandering in search of a house where I might be taken in. Finding none, or driven away from those I came across, happily towards evening I perceived a wretched little Polish farm, of which nothing can give you any idea unless you have seen the wooden houses of Lower Normandy, or the poorest farm-buildings of la Beauce. These dwellings consist of a single room, with one end divided off by a wooden partition, the smaller division serving as a store-room for forage.

'In the darkness of twilight I could just see a faint smoke rising above this house. Hoping to find there some comrades more compassionate than those I had hitherto addressed, I boldly walked as far as the farm. On going in, I found the table laid. Several officers, and with them a woman—a common sight enough—were eating potatoes, some horse-flesh broiled over the charcoal, and some frozen beetroots. I recognised among the company two or three artillery captains of the regiment in which I had first served. I was welcomed with a shout of acclamation, which would have amazed me greatly on the other side of the Beresina; but at this moment the cold was less intense; my fellow-officers were resting, they were warm, they had food, and the room, strewn with trusses of straw, gave the promise of a delightful night. We did not ask for so much in those days. My comrades could be philanthropists *gratis*—one of the commonest ways of being philanthropic. I sat down to eat on one of the bundles of straw.

'At the end of the table, by the side of the door opening into the smaller room full of straw and hay, sat my old colonel, one of the most extraordinary men I ever saw among all the mixed collection of men it has been my lot to meet. He was an Italian. Now, whenever human nature is truly fine in the lands of the south, it is really sublime. I do not know whether you have ever observed the extreme fairness of Italians when they are fair. It is exquisite, especially under an artificial light. When I read the fantastical portrait of Colonel Oudet sketched by Charles Nodier, I found my own sensations in every one of his elegant phrases. Italian, then, as were most of the officers of his regiment, which had, in fact, been borrowed by the Emperor from Eugène's army, my colonel was a tall man, at least eight or nine inches above the standard, and admirably proportioned—a little stout perhaps, but prodigiously powerful, active, and clean-limbed as a greyhound. His black hair in abundant curls showed up his complexion, as white as a woman's; he had small hands, a shapely foot, a pleasant mouth, and an aquiline nose delicately formed, of which the tip used to become naturally pinched and white whenever he was angry, as happened often. His irascibility was so far beyond belief that I will tell you nothing about it; you will have the opportunity of judging of it. No one could be calm in his presence. I alone, perhaps, was not afraid of him; he had indeed taken such a singular fancy to me that he thought everything I did right. When he was in a rage his brow was knit and the muscles of the middle of his forehead set in a delta, or, to be more explicit, in Redgauntlet's horse-shoe. This mark was, perhaps, even more terrifying than the magnetic flashes of his blue eyes. His whole frame quivered, and his strength, great as it was in his normal state, became almost unbounded.

'He spoke with a strong guttural roll. His voice, at least as powerful as that of Charles Nodier's Oudet,

threw an incredible fulness of tone into the syllable or the consonant in which this burr was sounded. Though this faulty pronunciation was at times a grace, when commanding his men, or when he was excited, you cannot imagine, unless you had heard it, what force was expressed by this accent, which at Paris is so common. When the Colonel was quiescent, his blue eyes were angelically sweet, and his smooth brow had a most charming expression. On parade, or with the army of Italy, not a man could compare with him. Indeed, d'Orsay himself, the handsome d'Orsay, was eclipsed by our colonel on the occasion of the last review held by Napoleon before the invasion of Russia.

'Everything was in contrasts in this exceptional man. Passion lives on contrast. Hence you need not ask whether he exerted over women the irresistible influences to which our nature yields'—and the general looked at the Princesse de Cadignan—'as vitreous matter is moulded under the pipe of the glass-blower; still, by a singular fatality—an observer might perhaps explain the phenomenon—the Colonel was not a lady-killer, or was indifferent to such successes.

'To give you an idea of his violence, I will tell you in a few words what I once saw him do in a paroxysm of fury. We were dragging our guns up a very narrow road, bordered by a somewhat high slope on one side, and by thickets on the other. When we were half-way up we met another regiment of artillery, its colonel marching at the head. This colonel wanted to make the captain who was at the head of our foremost battery back down again. The captain, of course, refused; but the colonel of the other regiment signed to his foremost battery to advance, and in spite of the care the driver took to keep among the scrub, the wheel of the first gun struck our captain's right leg and broke it, throwing him over on the near side of his horse. All this was the work of a moment. Our Colonel, who

was but a little way off, guessed that there was a quarrel; he galloped up, riding among the guns at the risk of falling with his horse's four feet in the air, and reached the spot, face to face with the other colonel, at the very moment when the captain fell, calling out "Help!" No, our Italian Colonel was no longer human! Foam like the froth of champagne rose to his lips; he roared inarticulately like a lion. Incapable of uttering a word, or even a cry, he made a terrific signal to his antagonist, pointing to the wood and drawing his sword. The two colonels went aside. In two seconds we saw our Colonel's opponent stretched on the ground, his skull split in two. The soldiers of his regiment backed—yes, by heaven, and pretty quickly too!

'The captain, who had been so nearly crushed, and who lay yelping in the puddle where the gun carriage had thrown him, had an Italian wife, a beautiful Sicilian of Messina, who was not indifferent to our Colonel. This circumstance had aggravated his rage. He was pledged to protect the husband, bound to defend him as he would have defended the woman herself.

'Now, in the hovel beyond Zembin, where I was so well received, this captain was sitting opposite to me, and his wife was at the other end of the table, facing the Colonel. This Sicilian was a little woman named Rosina, very dark, but with all the fire of the Southern sun in her black almond-shaped eyes. At this moment she was deplorably thin; her face was covered with dust, like fruit exposed to the drought of a high road. Scarcely clothed in rags, exhausted by marches, her hair in disorder, and clinging together under a piece of a shawl tied close over her head, still she had the graces of a woman; her movements were engaging, her small rosy mouth and white teeth, the outline of her features and figure, charms which misery, cold, and neglect had not altogether defaced, still suggested love to any man who could think of a woman. Rosina had one of those

frames which are fragile in appearance, but wiry and full of spring. Her husband, a gentleman of Piedmont, had a face expressive of ironical simplicity, if it is allowable to ally the two words. Brave and well informed, he seemed to know nothing of the connection which had subsisted between his wife and the Colonel for three years past. I ascribed this unconcern to Italian manners, or to some domestic secret; yet there was in the man's countenance one feature which always filled me with involuntary distrust. His under lip, which was thin and very restless, turned down at the corners instead of turning up, and this, as I thought, betrayed a streak of cruelty in a character which seemed so phlegmatic and indolent.

'As you may suppose, the conversation was not very sparkling when I went in. My weary comrades ate in silence; of course, they asked me some questions, and we related our misadventures, mingled with reflections on the campaign, the generals, their mistakes, the Russians, and the cold. A minute after my arrival the colonel, having finished his meagre meal, wiped his moustache, bid us good-night, shot a black look at the Italian woman, saying, "Rosina?" and then, without waiting for a reply, went into the little barn full of hay, to bed. The meaning of the Colonel's utterance was self-evident. The young wife replied by an indescribable gesture, expressing all the annoyance she could not but feel at seeing her thraldom thus flaunted without human decency, and the offence to her dignity as a woman, and to her husband. But there was, too, in the rigid setting of her features and the tight knitting of her brows a sort of presentiment; perhaps she foresaw her fate. Rosina remained quietly in her place.

'A minute later, and apparently when the Colonel was snug in his couch of straw or hay, he repeated, "Rosina?"

'The tone of this second call was even more brutally questioning than the first. The Colonel's strong burr, and the length which the Italian language allows to be

given to vowels and the final syllable, concentrated all the man's despotism, impatience, and strength of will. Rosina turned pale, but she rose, passed behind us, and went to the Colonel.

'All the party sat in utter silence; I, unluckily, after looking at them all, began to laugh, and then they all laughed too.—"*Tu ridi?*—you laugh?" said the husband.

'"On my honour, old comrade," said I, becoming serious again, "I confess that I was wrong; I ask your pardon a thousand times, and if you are not satisfied by my apologies I am ready to give you satisfaction."

'"Oh! it is not you who are wrong, it is I!" he replied coldly.

'Thereupon we all lay down in the room, and before long all were sound asleep.

'Next morning each one, without rousing his neighbour or seeking companionship, set out again on his way, with that selfishness which made our rout one of the most horrible dramas of self-seeking, melancholy, and horror which ever was enacted under heaven. Nevertheless, at about seven or eight hundred paces from our shelter we, most of us, met again and walked on together, like geese led in flocks by a child's wilful tyranny. The same necessity urged us all.

'Having reached a knoll whence we could still see the farmhouse where we had spent the night, we heard sounds resembling the roar of lions in the desert, the bellowing of bulls—no, it was a noise which can be compared to no known cry. And yet, mingling with this horrible and ominous roar, we could hear a woman's feeble scream. We all looked round, seized by I know not what impulse of terror; we no longer saw the house, but a huge bonfire. The farmhouse had been barricaded, and was in flames. Swirls of smoke borne on the wind brought us hoarse cries and an indescribable pungent smell. A few yards behind, the captain was quietly approaching to join our caravan; we gazed at him in

silence, for no one dared question him; but he, understanding our curiosity, pointed to his breast with the forefinger of his right hand, and, waving the left in the direction of the fire, he said, "*Son'io.*"

'We all walked on without saying a word to him.'

'There is nothing more terrible than the revolt of a sheep,' said de Marsay.

'It would be frightful to let us leave with this horrible picture in our memory,' said Madame de Montcornet. 'I shall dream of it——'

'And what was the punishment of Monsieur de Marsay's "First"?' said Lord Dudley, smiling.

'When the English are in jest, their foils have the buttons on,' said Blondet.

'Monsieur Bianchon can tell us, for he saw her dying,' replied de Marsay, turning to me.

'Yes,' said I; 'and her end was one of the most beautiful I ever saw. The Duke and I had spent the night by the dying woman's pillow; pulmonary consumption, in the last stage, left no hope; she had taken the sacrament the day before. The Duke had fallen asleep. The Duchess, waking at about four in the morning, signed to me in the most touching way, with a friendly smile, to bid me leave him to rest, and she meanwhile was about to die. She had become incredibly thin, but her face had preserved its really sublime outline and features. Her pallor made her skin look like porcelain with a light within. Her bright eyes and colour contrasted with this languidly elegant complexion, and her countenance was full of impressive calm. She seemed to pity the Duke, and the feeling had its origin in a lofty tenderness which, as death approached, seemed to know no bounds. The silence was absolute. The room, softly lighted by a lamp, looked like every sick-room at the hour of death.

'At this moment the clock struck. The Duke awoke, and was in despair at having fallen asleep. I did not see

the gesture of impatience by which he manifested the regret he felt at having lost sight of his wife for a few of the last minutes vouchsafed to him; but it is quite certain that any one but the dying woman might have misunderstood it. A busy statesman, always thinking of the interests of France, the Duke had a thousand odd ways on the surface, such as often lead to a man of genius being mistaken for a madman, and of which the explanation lies in the exquisiteness and exacting needs of their intellect. He came to seat himself in an armchair by his wife's side, and looked fixedly at her. The dying woman put her hand out a little way, took her husband's and clasped it feebly; and in a low but agitated voice she said, "My poor dear, who is left to understand you now?" Then she died, looking at him.'

'The stories the doctor tells us,' said the Comte de Vandenesse, 'always leave a deep impression.'

'But a sweet one,' said Mademoiselle des Touches, rising.

PARIS, *June* 1839-42.

LA GRANDE BRETÊCHE

(*Sequel to 'Another Study of Woman.'*)

'AH! Madame,' replied the doctor,' I have some appalling stories in my collection. But each one has its proper hour in a conversation—you know the pretty jest recorded by Chamfort, and said to the Duc de Fronsac: "Between your sally and the present moment lie ten bottles of champagne."'

'But it is two in the morning, and the story of Rosina has prepared us,' said the mistress of the house.

'Tell us, Monsieur Bianchon!' was the cry on every side.

The obliging doctor bowed, and silence reigned.

'At about a hundred paces from Vendôme, on the banks of the Loir,' said he, 'stands an old brown house, crowned with very high roofs, and so completely isolated that there is nothing near it, not even a fetid tannery or a squalid tavern, such as are commonly seen outside small towns. In front of this house is a garden down to the river, where the box shrubs, formerly clipped close to edge the walks, now straggle at their own will. A few willows, rooted in the stream, have grown up quickly like an enclosing fence, and half hide the house. The wild plants we call weeds have clothed the bank with their beautiful luxuriance. The fruit-trees, neglected for these ten years past, no longer bear a crop, and their suckers have formed a thicket. The espaliers are like a

copse. The paths, once gravelled, are overgrown with purslane; but, to be accurate, there is no trace of a path.

'Looking down from the hill-top, to which cling the ruins of the old castle of the Dukes of Vendôme, the only spot whence the eye can see into this enclosure, we think that at a time, difficult now to determine, this spot of earth must have been the joy of some country gentleman devoted to roses and tulips, in a word, to horticulture, but above all a lover of choice fruit. An arbour is visible, or rather the wreck of an arbour, and under it a table still stands not entirely destroyed by time. At the aspect of this garden that is no more, the negative joys of the peaceful life of the provinces may be divined as we divine the history of a worthy tradesman when we read the epitaph on his tomb. To complete the mournful and tender impressions which seize the soul, on one of the walls there is a sundial graced with this homely Christian motto, "*Ultimam cogita.*"

'The roof of this house is dreadfully dilapidated; the outside shutters are always closed; the balconies are hung with swallows' nests; the doors are for ever shut. Straggling grasses have outlined the flagstones of the steps with green; the ironwork is rusty. Moon and sun, winter, summer, and snow have eaten into the wood, warped the boards, peeled off the paint. The dreary silence is broken only by birds and cats, pole-cats, rats, and mice, free to scamper round, and fight, and eat each other. An invisible hand has written over it all: "Mystery."

'If, prompted by curiosity, you go to look at this house from the street, you will see a large gate, with a round-arched top; the children have made many holes in it. I learned later that this door had been blocked for ten years. Through these irregular breaches you will see that the side towards the courtyard is in perfect harmony with the side towards the garden. The same ruin prevails. Tufts of weeds outline the paving stones;

the walls are scored by enormous cracks, and the blackened coping is laced with a thousand festoons of pellitory. The stone steps are disjointed; the bell-cord is rotten; the gutter-spouts broken. What fire from heaven can have fallen there? By what decree has salt been sown on this dwelling? Has God been mocked here? Or was France betrayed? These are the questions we ask ourselves. Reptiles crawl over it, but give no reply. This empty and deserted house is a vast enigma of which the answer is known to none.

'It was formerly a little domain, held in fief, and is known as La Grande Bretêche. During my stay at Vendôme, where Despleins had left me in charge of a rich patient, the sight of this strange dwelling became one of my keenest pleasures. Was it not far better than a ruin? Certain memories of indisputable authenticity attach themselves to a ruin; but this house, still standing, though being slowly destroyed by an avenging hand, contained a secret, an unrevealed thought. At the very least it testified to a caprice. More than once in the evening I boarded the hedge, run wild, which surrounded the enclosure. I braved scratches, I got into this ownerless garden, this plot which was no longer public or private; I lingered there for hours gazing at the disorder. I would not, as the price of the story to which this strange scene no doubt was due, have asked a single question of any gossiping native. On that spot I wove delightful romances, and abandoned myself to little debauches of melancholy which enchanted me. If I had known the reason—perhaps quite commonplace—of this neglect, I should have lost the unwritten poetry which intoxicated me. To me this refuge represented the most various phases of human life, shadowed by misfortune; sometimes the calm of a cloister without the monks; sometimes the peace of the graveyard without the dead, who speak in the language of epitaphs; one day I saw in it the home of lepers; another, the house of

the Atridæ ; but, above all, I found there provincial life, with its contemplative ideas, its hour-glass existence. I often wept there, I never laughed.

'More than once I felt involuntary terrors as I heard overhead the dull hum of the wings of some hurrying wood-pigeon. The earth is dank ; you must be on the watch for lizards, vipers, and frogs, wandering about with the wild freedom of nature ; above all, you must have no fear of cold, for in a few minutes you feel an icy cloak settle on your shoulders, like the Commendatore's hand on Don Giovanni's neck.

'One evening I felt a shudder ; the wind had turned an old rusty weathercock, and the creaking sounded like a cry from the house, at the very moment when I was finishing a gloomy drama to account for this monumental embodiment of woe. I returned to my inn, lost in gloomy thoughts. When I had supped, the hostess came in to my room with an air of mystery, and said, "Monsieur, here is Monsieur Regnault."

'"Who is Monsieur Regnault ?"

'"What, sir, do not you know Monsieur Regnault ?—Well, that's odd," said she, leaving the room.

'On a sudden I saw a man appear, tall, slim, dressed in black, hat in hand, who came in like a ram ready to butt his opponent, showing a receding forehead, a small pointed head, and a colourless face of the hue of a glass of dirty water. You would have taken him for an usher. The stranger wore an old coat, much worn at the seams; but he had a diamond in his shirt frill, and gold rings in his ears.

'"Monsieur," said I, "whom have I the honour of addressing ?"—He took a chair, placed himself in front of my fire, put his hat on my table, and answered while he rubbed his hands : "Dear me, it is very cold.—Monsieur, I am Monsieur Regnault."

'I was encouraging myself by saying to myself, "*Il bondo cani !* Seek !"

'"I am," he went on, "notary at Vendôme."

'"I am delighted to hear it, Monsieur," I exclaimed. "But I am not in a position to make a will for reasons best known to myself."

'"One moment!" said he, holding up his hand as though to gain silence. "Allow me, Monsieur, allow me! I am informed that you sometimes go to walk in the garden of la Grande Bretêche."

'"Yes, Monsieur."

'"One moment!" said he, repeating his gesture. "That constitutes a misdemeanour. Monsieur, as executor under the will of the late Comtesse de Merret, I come in her name to beg you to discontinue the practice. One moment! I am not a Turk, and do not wish to make a crime of it. And besides, you are free to be ignorant of the circumstances which compel me to leave the finest mansion in Vendôme to fall into ruin. Nevertheless, Monsieur, you must be a man of education, and you should know that the laws forbid, under heavy penalties, any trespass on enclosed property. A hedge is the same as a wall. But, the state in which the place is left may be an excuse for your curiosity. For my part, I should be quite content to make you free to come and go in the house; but being bound to respect the will of the testatrix, I have the honour, Monsieur, to beg that you will go into the garden no more. I myself, Monsieur, since the will was read, have never set foot in the house, which, as I had the honour of informing you, is part of the estate of the late Madame de Merret. We have done nothing there but verify the number of doors and windows to assess the taxes I have to pay annually out of the funds left for that purpose by the late Madame de Merret. Ah! my dear sir, her will made a great commotion in the town."

'The good man paused to blow his nose. I respected his volubility, perfectly understanding that the administration of Madame de Merret's estate had been the most

important event of his life, his reputation, his glory, his Restoration. As I was forced to bid farewell to my beautiful reveries and romances, I was to reject learning the truth on official authority.

'"Monsieur," said I, "would it be indiscreet if I were to ask you the reasons for such eccentricity?"

'At these words an expression, which revealed all the pleasure which men feel who are accustomed to ride a hobby, overspread the lawyer's countenance. He pulled up the collar of his shirt with an air, took out his snuff-box, opened it, and offered me a pinch; on my refusing, he took a large one. He was happy! A man who has no hobby does not know all the good to be got out of life. A hobby is the happy medium between a passion and a monomania. At this moment I understood the whole bearing of Sterne's charming passion, and had a perfect idea of the delight with which my uncle Toby, encouraged by Trim, bestrode his hobby-horse.

'"Monsieur," said Monsieur Regnault, "I was head clerk in Monsieur Roguin's office, in Paris. A first-rate house, which you may have heard mentioned? No! An unfortunate bankruptcy made it famous.—Not having money enough to purchase a practice in Paris at the price to which they were run up in 1816, I came here and bought my predecessor's business. I had relations in Vendôme; among others, a wealthy aunt, who allowed me to marry her daughter.—Monsieur," he went on after a little pause, "three months after being licensed by the Keeper of the Seals, one evening, as I was going to bed—it was before my marriage—I was sent for by Madame la Comtesse de Merret, to her Château of Merret. Her maid, a good girl, who is now a servant in this inn, was waiting at my door with the Countess's own carriage. Ah! one moment! I ought to tell you that Monsieur le Comte de Merret had gone to Paris to die two months before I came here. He came to a

miserable end, flinging himself into every kind of dissipation. You understand?

'"On the day when he left, Madame la Comtesse had quitted la Grande Bretêche, having dismantled it. Some people even say that she had burnt all the furniture, the hangings—in short, all the chattels and furniture whatever used in furnishing the premises now let by the said M.—(Dear! what am I saying? I beg your pardon, I thought I was dictating a lease.)—In short, that she burnt everything in the meadow at Merret. Have you been to Merret, Monsieur?—No," said he, answering himself. "Ah, it is a very fine place."

'"For about three months previously," he went on, with a jerk of his head, "the Count and Countess had lived in a very eccentric way; they admitted no visitors; Madame lived on the ground floor, and Monsieur on the first floor. When the Countess was left alone, she was never seen excepting at church. Subsequently, at home, at the château, she refused to see the friends, whether gentlemen or ladies, who went to call on her. She was already very much altered when she left la Grande Bretêche to go to Merret. That dear lady—I say dear lady, for it was she who gave me this diamond, but indeed I saw her but once—that kind lady was very ill; she had, no doubt, given up all hope, for she died without choosing to send for a doctor; indeed, many of our ladies fancied she was not quite right in her head. Well, sir, my curiosity was strangely excited by hearing that Madame de Merret had need of my services. Nor was I the only person who took an interest in the affair. That very night, though it was already late, all the town knew that I was going to Merret.

'"The waiting-woman replied but vaguely to the questions I asked her on the way; nevertheless, she told me that her mistress had received the Sacrament in the course of the day at the hands of the Curé of Merret, and seemed unlikely to live through the night. It was about

eleven when I reached the château. I went up the great staircase. After crossing some large, lofty, dark rooms, diabolically cold and damp, I reached the state bedroom where the Countess lay. From the rumours that were current concerning this lady (Monsieur, I should never end if I were to repeat all the tales that were told about her), I had imagined her a coquette. Imagine, then, that I had great difficulty in seeing her in the great bed where she was lying. To be sure, to light this enormous room, with old-fashioned heavy cornices, and so thick with dust that merely to see it was enough to make you sneeze, she had only an old Argand lamp. Ah! but you have not been to Merret. Well, the bed is one of those old-world beds, with a high tester hung with flowered chintz. A small table stood by the bed, on which I saw an 'Imitation of Christ,' which, by the way, I bought for my wife, as well as the lamp. There were also a deep armchair for her confidential maid, and two small chairs. There was no fire. That was all the furniture; not enough to fill ten lines in an inventory.

'"My dear sir, if you had seen, as I then saw, that vast room, papered and hung with brown, you would have felt yourself transported into a scene of a romance. It was icy, nay more, funereal," and he lifted his hand with a theatrical gesture and paused.

'"By dint of seeking, as I approached the bed, at last I saw Madame de Merret, under the glimmer of the lamp, which fell on the pillows. Her face was as yellow as wax, and as narrow as two folded hands. The Countess had a lace cap showing abundant hair, but as white as linen thread. She was sitting up in bed, and seemed to keep upright with great difficulty. Her large black eyes, dimmed by fever, no doubt, and half-dead already, hardly moved under the bony arch of her eyebrows.—There," he added, pointing to his own brow. "Her forehead was clammy; her fleshless hands were

like bones covered with soft skin; the veins and muscles were perfectly visible. She must have been very handsome; but at this moment I was startled into an indescribable emotion at the sight. Never, said those who wrapped her in her shroud, had any living creature been so emaciated and lived. In short, it was awful to behold! Sickness had so consumed that woman, that she was no more than a phantom. Her lips, which were pale violet, seemed to me not to move when she spoke to me.'

'"Though my profession has familiarised me with such spectacles, by calling me not unfrequently to the bedside of the dying to record their last wishes, I confess that families in tears and the agonies I have seen were as nothing in comparison with this lonely and silent woman in her vast château. I heard not the least sound, I did not perceive the movement which the sufferer's breathing ought to have given to the sheets that covered her, and I stood motionless, absorbed in looking at her in a sort of stupor. In fancy I am there still.—At last her large eyes moved; she tried to raise her right hand, but it fell back on the bed, and she uttered these words, which came like a breath, for her voice was no longer a voice: 'I have waited for you with the greatest impatience.' A bright flush rose to her cheeks. It was a great effort to her to speak.

'"Madame," I began. She signed to me to be silent. At that moment the old housekeeper rose and said in my ear, 'Do not speak; Madame la Comtesse is not in a state to bear the slightest noise, and what you would say might agitate her.'

'I sat down. A few instants after, Madame de Merret collected all her remaining strength to move her right hand, and slipped it, not without infinite difficulty, under the bolster; she then paused a moment. With a last effort she withdrew her hand; and when she brought out a sealed paper, drops of perspiration rolled from her brow.

'I place my will in your hands—Oh! God! Oh!' and that was all. She clutched a crucifix that lay on the bed, lifted it hastily to her lips, and died.

'"The expression of her eyes still makes me shudder as I think of it. She must have suffered much! There was joy in her last glance, and it remained stamped on her dead eyes.

'"I brought away the will, and when it was opened I found that Madame de Merret had appointed me her executor. She left the whole of her property to the hospital at Vendôme excepting a few legacies. But these were her instructions as relating to la Grande Bretêche: She ordered me to leave the place, for fifty years counting from the day of her death, in the state in which it might be at the time of her decease, forbidding any one, whoever he might be, to enter the apartments, prohibiting any repairs whatever, and even settling a salary to pay watchmen if it were needful to secure the absolute fulfilment of her intentions. At the expiration of that term, if the will of the testatrix has been duly carried out, the house is to become the property of my heirs, for, as you know, a notary cannot take a bequest. Otherwise la Grande Bretêche reverts to the heirs-at-law, but on condition of fulfilling certain conditions set forth in a codicil to the will, which is not to be opened till the expiration of the said term of fifty years. The will has not been disputed, so——" And without finishing his sentence, the lanky notary looked a met with an air of triumph; I made him quite happy by offering him my congratulations.

'"Monsieur," I said in conclusion, "you have so vividly impressed me that I fancy I see the dying woman whiter than her sheets; her glittering eyes frighten me; I shall dream of her to-night.—But you must have formed some idea as to the instructions contained in that extraordinary will."

'"Monsieur," said he, with comical reticence, "I

never allow myself to criticise the conduct of a person who honours me with the gift of a diamond."

'However, I soon loosened the tongue of the discreet notary of Vendôme, who communicated to me, not without long digressions, the opinions of the deep politicians of both sexes whose judgments are law in Vendôme. But these opinions were so contradictory, so diffuse, that I was near falling asleep in spite of the interest I felt in this authentic history. The notary's ponderous voice and monotonous accent, accustomed no doubt to listen to himself and to make himself listened to by his clients or fellow-townsmen, were too much for my curiosity. Happily, he soon went away.

'"Ah, ha, Monsieur," said he on the stairs, "a good many persons would be glad to live five-and-forty years longer; but—one moment!" and he laid the first finger of his right hand to his nostril with a cunning look, as much as to say, "Mark my words!—To last as long as that—as long as that," said he, "you must not be past sixty now."

'I closed my door, having been roused from my apathy by this last speech, which the notary thought very funny; then I sat down in my armchair, with my feet on the fire-dogs. I had lost myself in a romance *à la* Radcliffe, constructed on the juridical base given me by Monsieur Regnault, when the door, opened by a woman's cautious hand, turned on the hinges. I saw my landlady come in, a buxom, florid dame, always good-humoured, who had missed her calling in life. She was a Fleming, who ought to have seen the light in a picture by Teniers.

'"Well, Monsieur," said she, "Monsieur Regnault has no doubt been giving you his history of la Grande Bretêche?"

'"Yes, Madame Lepas."

'"And what did he tell you?"

'I repeated in a few words the creepy and sinister

story of Madame de Merret. At each sentence my hostess put her head forward, looking at me with an innkeeper's keen scrutiny, a happy compromise between the instinct of a police constable, the astuteness of a spy, and the cunning of a dealer.

'"My good Madame Lepas," said I as I ended, "you seem to know more about it. Heh? If not, why have you come up to me?"

'"On my word, as an honest woman——"

'"Do not swear; your eyes are big with a secret. You knew Monsieur de Merret; what sort of man was he?"

'"Monsieur de Merret—well, you see he was a man you never could see the top of, he was so tall! A very good gentleman, from Picardy, and who had, as we say, his head close to his cap. He paid for everything down, so as never to have difficulties with any one. He was hot-tempered, you see! All our ladies liked him very much."

'"Because he was hot-tempered?" I asked her.

'"Well, may be," said she; "and you may suppose, sir, that a man had to have something to show for a figure-head before he could marry Madame de Merret, who, without any reflection on others, was the handsomest and richest heiress in our parts. She had about twenty thousand francs a year. All the town was at the wedding; the bride was pretty and sweet-looking, quite a gem of a woman. Oh, they were a handsome couple in their day!"

'"And were they happy together?"

'"Hm, hm! so-so—so far as can be guessed, for, as you may suppose, we of the common sort were not hail-fellow-well-met with them.—Madame de Merret was a kind woman and very pleasant, who had no doubt sometimes to put up with her husband's tantrums. But though he was rather haughty, we were fond of him. After all, it was his place to behave so. When a man is a born nobleman, you see——"

'"Still, there must have been some catastrophe for Monsieur and Madame de Merret to part so violently?"

'"I did not say there was any catastrophe, sir. I know nothing about it."

'"Indeed. Well, now, I am sure you know everything."

'"Well, sir, I will tell you the whole story.—When I saw Monsieur Regnault go up to see you, it struck me that he would speak to you about Madame de Merret as having to do with la Grande Bretêche. That put it into my head to ask your advice, sir, seeming to me that you are a man of good judgment and incapable of playing a poor woman like me false—for I never did any one a wrong, and yet I am tormented by my conscience. Up to now I have never dared to say a word to the people of these parts; they are all chatter-mags, with tongues like knives. And never till now, sir, have I had any traveller here who stayed so long in the inn as you have, and to whom I could tell the history of the fifteen thousand francs——"

'"My dear Madame Lepas, if there is anything in your story of a nature to compromise me," I said, interrupting the flow of her words, "I would not hear it for all the world."

"You need have no fears," said she; "you will see."

'Her eagerness made me suspect that I was not the only person to whom my worthy landlady had communicated the secret of which I was to be sole possessor, but I listened.

'"Monsieur," said she, "when the Emperor sent the Spaniards here, prisoners of war and others, I was required to lodge at the charge of the Government a young Spaniard sent to Vendôme on parole. Notwithstanding his parole, he had to show himself every day to the sub-prefect. He was a Spanish grandee—neither more nor less. He had a name in *os* and *dia*, something like Bagos

de Férédia. I wrote his name down in my books, and you may see it if you like. Ah! he was a handsome young fellow for a Spaniard, who are all ugly they say. He was not more than five feet two or three in height, but so well made; and he had little hands that he kept so beautifully! Ah! you should have seen them. He had as many brushes for his hands as a woman has for her toilet. He had thick, black hair, a flame in his eye, a somewhat coppery complexion, but which I admired all the same. He wore the finest linen I have ever seen, though I have had princesses to lodge here, and, among others, General Bertrand, the Duc and Duchesse d'Abrantés, Monsieur Descazes, and the King of Spain. He did not eat much, but he had such polite and amiable ways that it was impossible to owe him a grudge for that. Oh! I was very fond of him, though he did not say four words to me in a day, and it was impossible to have the least bit of talk with him; if he was spoken to, he did not answer; it is a way, a mania they all have, it would seem.

'"He read his breviary like a priest, and went to mass and all the services quite regularly. And where did he post himself?—we found this out later.—Within two yards of Madame de Merret's chapel. As he took that place the very first time he entered the church, no one imagined that there was any purpose in it. Besides, he never raised his nose above his book, poor young man! And then, Monsieur, of an evening he went for a walk on the hill among the ruins of the old castle. It was his only amusement, poor man; it reminded him of his native land. They say that Spain is all hills!

'"One evening, a few days after he was sent here, he was out very late. I was rather uneasy when he did not come in till just on the stroke of midnight; but we all got used to his whims; he took the key of the door, and we never sat up for him. He lived in a house belonging to us in the Rue des Casernes. Well, then, one of our

stable-boys told us one evening that, going down to wash the horses in the river, he fancied he had seen the Spanish Grandee swimming some little way off, just like a fish. When he came in, I told him to be careful of the weeds, and he seemed put out at having been seen in the water.

'"At last, Monsieur, one day, or rather one morning, we did not find him in his room; he had not come back. By hunting through his things, I found a written paper in the drawer of his table, with fifty pieces of Spanish gold of the kind they call doubloons, worth about five thousand francs; and in a little sealed box ten thousand francs' worth of diamonds. The paper said that in case he should not return, he left us this money and these diamonds in trust to found masses to thank God for his escape and for his salvation.

'"At that time I still had my husband, who ran off in search of him. And this is the queer part of the story: he brought back the Spaniard's clothes, which he had found under a big stone on a sort of breakwater along the river bank, nearly opposite la Grande Bretêche. My husband went so early that no one saw him. After reading the letter, he burnt the clothes, and, in obedience to Count Férédia's wish, we announced that he had escaped.

'"The sub-prefect set all the constabulary at his heels; but, pshaw! he was never caught. Lepas believed that the Spaniard had drowned himself. I, sir, have never thought so; I believe, on the contrary, that he had something to do with the business about Madame de Merret, seeing that Rosalie told me that the crucifix her mistress was so fond of that she had it buried with her, was made of ebony and silver; now in the early days of his stay here, Monsieur Férédia had one of ebony and silver which I never saw later.—And now, Monsieur, do not you say that I need have no remorse about the Spaniard's fifteen thousand francs? Are they not really and truly mine?"

'"Certainly.—But have you never tried to question Rosalie?" said I.

'"Oh, to be sure I have, sir. But what is to be done? That girl is like a wall. She knows something, but it is impossible to make her talk."

'After chatting with me for a few minutes, my hostess left me a prey to vague and sinister thoughts, to romantic curiosity, and a religious dread, not unlike the deep emotion which comes upon us when we go into a dark church at night and discern a feeble light glimmering under a lofty vault—a dim figure glides across—the sweep of a gown or of a priest's cassock is audible—and we shiver! La Grande Bretêche, with its rank grasses, its shuttered windows, its rusty iron-work, its locked doors, its deserted rooms, suddenly rose before me in fantastic vividness. I tried to get into the mysterious dwelling to search out the heart of this solemn story, this drama which had killed three persons.

'Rosalie became in my eyes the most interesting being in Vendôme. As I studied her, I detected signs of an inmost thought, in spite of the blooming health that glowed in her dimpled face. There was in her soul some element of ruth or of hope; her manner suggested a secret, like the expression of devout souls who pray in excess, or of a girl who has killed her child and for ever hears its last cry. Nevertheless, she was simple and clumsy in her ways; her vacant smile had nothing criminal in it, and you would have pronounced her innocent only from seeing the large red and blue checked kerchief that covered her stalwart bust, tucked into the tight-laced square bodice of a lilac- and white-striped gown. "No," said I to myself, "I will not quit Vendôme without knowing the whole history of la Grande Bretêche. To achieve this end, I will make love to Rosalie if it proves necessary."

'"Rosalie!" said I one evening.

'"Your servant, sir?"

'"You are not married?" She started a little.

'"Oh! there is no lack of men if ever I take a fancy to be miserable!" she replied, laughing. She got over her agitation at once; for every woman, from the highest lady to the inn-servant inclusive, has a native presence of mind.

'"Yes; you are fresh and good-looking enough never to lack lovers! But tell me, Rosalie, why did you become an inn-servant on leaving Madame de Merret? Did she not leave you some little annuity?"

'"Oh yes, sir. But my place here is the best in all the town of Vendôme."

'This reply was such an one as judges and attorneys call evasive. Rosalie, as it seemed to me, held in this romantic affair the place of the middle square of the chess-board; she was at the very centre of the interest and of the truth; she appeared to me to be tied into the knot of it. It was not a case for ordinary love-making; this girl contained the last chapter of a romance, and from that moment all my attentions were devoted to Rosalie. By dint of studying the girl, I observed in her, as in every woman whom we make our ruling thought, a variety of good qualities; she was clean and neat; she was handsome, I need not say; she soon was possessed of every charm that desire can lend to a woman in whatever rank of life. A fortnight after the notary's visit, one evening, or rather one morning, in the small hours, I said to Rosalie—

'"Come, tell me all you know about Madame de Merret."

'"Oh!" she cried in terror, "do not ask me that, Monsieur Horace!"

'Her handsome features clouded over, her bright colouring grew pale, and her eyes lost their artless, liquid brightness.

'"Well," she said, "I will tell you; but keep the secret carefully."

'"All right, my child; I will keep all your secrets with a thief's honour, which is the most loyal known."

'"If it is all the same to you," said she, "I would rather it should be with your own."

'Thereupon she set her head-kerchief straight, and settled herself to tell the tale; for there is no doubt a particular attitude of confidence and security is necessary to the telling of a narrative. The best tales are told at a certain hour—just as we are all here at table. No one ever told a story well standing up, or fasting.

'If I were to reproduce exactly Rosalie's diffuse eloquence, a whole volume would scarcely contain it. Now, as the event of which she gave me a confused account stands exactly midway between the notary's gossip and that of Madame Lepas, as precisely as the middle term of a rule-of-three sum stands between the first and third, I have only to relate it in as few words as may be. I shall therefore be brief.

'The room at la Grande Bretêche in which Madame de Merret slept was on the ground floor; a little cupboard in the wall, about four feet deep, served her to hang her dresses in. Three months before the evening of which I have to relate the events, Madame de Merret had been seriously ailing, so much so that her husband had left her to herself, and had his own bedroom on the first floor. By one of those accidents which it is impossible to foresee, he came in that evening two hours later than usual from the club, where he went to read the papers and talk politics with the residents in the neighbourhood. His wife supposed him to have come in, to be in bed and asleep. But the invasion of France had been the subject of a very animated discussion; the game of billiards had waxed vehement; he had lost forty francs, an enormous sum at Vendôme, where everybody is thrifty, and where social habits are restrained within the bounds of a simplicity worthy of all praise, and the foundation

perhaps of a form of true happiness which no Parisian would care for.

'For some time past Monsieur de Merret had been satisfied to ask Rosalie whether his wife was in bed; on the girl's replying always in the affirmative, he at once went to his own room, with the good faith that comes of habit and confidence. But this evening, on coming in, he took it into his head to go to see Madame de Merret, to tell her of his ill-luck, and perhaps to find consolation. During dinner he had observed that his wife was very becomingly dressed; he reflected as he came home from the club that his wife was certainly much better, that convalescence had improved her beauty, discovering it, as husbands discover everything, a little too late. Instead of calling Rosalie, who was in the kitchen at the moment watching the cook and the coachman playing a puzzling hand at cards, Monsieur de Merret made his way to his wife's room by the light of his lantern, which he set down on the lowest step of the stairs. His step, easy to recognise, rang under the vaulted passage.

'At the instant when the gentleman turned the key to enter his wife's room, he fancied he heard the door shut of the closet of which I have spoken; but when he went in, Madame de Merret was alone, standing in front of the fireplace. The unsuspecting husband fancied that Rosalie was in the cupboard; nevertheless, a doubt, ringing in his ears like a peal of bells, put him on his guard; he looked at his wife, and read in her eyes an indescribably anxious and haunted expression.

'"You are very late," said she.—Her voice, usually so clear and sweet, struck him as being slightly husky.

'Monsieur de Merret made no reply, for at this moment Rosalie came in. This was like a thunder-clap. He walked up and down the room, going from one window to another at a regular pace, his arms folded.

'"Have you had bad news, or are you ill?" his wife

asked him timidly, while Rosalie helped her to undress. He made no reply.

'"You can go, Rosalie," said Madame de Merret to her maid; "I can put in my curl-papers myself."—She scented disaster at the mere aspect of her husband's face, and wished to be alone with him. As soon as Rosalie was gone, or supposed to be gone, for she lingered a few minutes in the passage, Monsieur de Merret came and stood facing his wife, and said coldly, "Madame, there is some one in your cupboard!" She looked at her husband calmly, and replied quite simply, "No, Monsieur."

'This "No" wrung Monsieur de Merret's heart; he did not believe it; and yet his wife had never appeared purer or more saintly than she seemed to be at this moment. He rose to go and open the closet door. Madame de Merret took his hand, stopped him, looked at him sadly, and said in a voice of strange emotion, "Remember, if you should find no one there, everything must be at an end between you and me."

'The extraordinary dignity of his wife's attitude filled him with deep esteem for her, and inspired him with one of those resolves which need only a grander stage to become immortal.

'"No, Josephine," he said, "I will not open it. In either event we should be parted for ever. Listen; I know all the purity of your soul, I know you lead a saintly life, and would not commit a deadly sin to save your life."—At these words Madame de Merret looked at her husband with a haggard stare—"See, here is your crucifix," he went on. "Swear to me before God that there is no one in there; I will believe you—I will never open that door."

'Madame de Merret took up the crucifix and said, "I swear it."

'"Louder," said her husband; "and repeat: 'I swear before God that there is nobody in that closet.'" She repeated the words without flinching.

'"That will do," said Monsieur de Merret coldly. After a moment's silence: "You have there a fine piece of work which I never saw before," said he, examining the crucifix of ebony and silver, very artistically wrought.

'"I found it at Duvivier's; last year when that troop of Spanish prisoners came through Vendôme, he bought it of a Spanish monk."

'"Indeed," said Monsieur de Merret, hanging the crucifix on its nail; and he rang the bell.

'He had not to wait for Rosalie. Monsieur de Merret went forward quickly to meet her, led her into the bay of the window that looked on to the garden, and said to her in an undertone—

'"I know that Gorenflot wants to marry you, that poverty alone prevents your setting up house, and that you told him you would not be his wife till he found means to become a master mason.—Well, go and fetch him; tell him to come here with his trowel and tools. Contrive to wake no one in his house but himself. His reward will be beyond your wishes. Above all, go out without saying a word—or else!" and he frowned.

'Rosalie was going, and he called her back. "Here, take my latch-key," said he.

'"Jean!" Monsieur de Merret called in a voice of thunder down the passage. Jean, who was both coachman and confidential servant, left his cards and came.

'"Go to bed, all of you," said his master, beckoning him to come close; and the gentleman added in a whisper, "When they are all asleep—mind, *asleep*—you understand?—come down and tell me."

'Monsieur de Merret, who had never lost sight of his wife while giving his orders, quietly came back to her at the fireside, and began to tell her the details of the game of billiards and the discussion at the club. When Rosalie returned she found Monsieur and Madame de Merret conversing amiably.

'Not long before this Monsieur de Merret had had

new ceilings made to all the reception-rooms on the ground floor. Plaster is very scarce at Vendôme; the price is enhanced by the cost of carriage; the gentleman had therefore had a considerable quantity delivered to him, knowing that he could always find purchasers for what might be left. It was this circumstance which suggested the plan he carried out.

'"Gorenflot is here, sir," said Rosalie in a whisper.

'"Tell him to come in," said her master aloud.

'Madame de Merret turned paler when she saw the mason.

'"Gorenflot," said her husband, "go and fetch some bricks from the coach-house; bring enough to wall up the door of this cupboard; you can use the plaster that is left for cement." Then, dragging Rosalie and the workman close to him—"Listen, Gorenflot," said he, in a low voice, "you are to sleep here to-night; but to-morrow morning you shall have a passport to take you abroad to a place I will tell you of. I will give you six thousand francs for your journey. You must live in that town for ten years; if you find you do not like it, you may settle in another, but it must be in the same country. Go through Paris and wait there till I join you. I will there give you an agreement for six thousand francs more, to be paid to you on your return, provided you have carried out the conditions of the bargain. For that price you are to keep perfect silence as to what you have to do this night. To you, Rosalie, I will secure ten thousand francs, which will not be paid to you till your wedding day, and on condition of your marrying Gorenflot; but, to get married, you must hold your tongue. If not, no wedding gift!"

'"Rosalie," said Madame de Merret, "come and brush my hair."

'Her husband quietly walked up and down the room, keeping an eye on the door, on the mason, and on his wife, but without any insulting display of suspicion.

Gorenflot could not help making some noise. Madame de Merret seized a moment when he was unloading some bricks, and when her husband was at the other end of the room, to say to Rosalie: "My dear child, I will give you a thousand francs a year if only you will tell Gorenflot to leave a crack at the bottom." Then she added aloud quite coolly: "You had better help him."

'Monsieur and Madame de Merret were silent all the time while Gorenflot was walling up the door. This silence was intentional on the husband's part; he did not wish to give his wife the opportunity of saying anything with a double meaning. On Madame de Merret's side it was pride or prudence. When the wall was half built up the cunning mason took advantage of his master's back being turned to break one of the two panes in the top of the door with a blow of his pick. By this Madame de Merret understood that Rosalie had spoken to Gorenflot. They all three then saw the face of a dark, gloomy-looking man, with black hair and flaming eyes.

'Before her husband turned round again the poor woman had nodded to the stranger, to whom the signal was meant to convey, "Hope."

'At four o'clock, as day was dawning, for it was the month of September, the work was done. The mason was placed in charge of Jean, and Monsieur de Merret slept in his wife's room.

'Next morning when he got up he said with apparent carelessness, "Oh, by the way, I must go to the Mairie for the passport." He put on his hat, took two or three steps towards the door, paused, and took the crucifix. His wife was trembling with joy.

'"He will go to Duvivier's," thought she.

'As soon as he had left, Madame de Merret rang for Rosalie, and then in a terrible voice she cried: "The pick! Bring the pick! and set to work. I saw how

Gorenflot did it yesterday; we shall have time to make a gap and build it up again."

'In an instant Rosalie had brought her mistress a sort of cleaver; she, with a vehemence of which no words can give an idea, set to work to demolish the wall. She had already got out a few bricks, when, turning to deal a stronger blow than before, she saw behind her Monsieur de Merret. She fainted away.

'"Lay Madame on her bed," said he coldly.

'Foreseeing what would certainly happen in his absence, he had laid this trap for his wife; he had merely written to the Maire and sent for Duvivier. The jeweller arrived just as the disorder in the room had been repaired.

'"Duvivier," asked Monsieur de Merret, "did not you buy some crucifixes of the Spaniards who passed through the town?"

'"No, Monsieur."

'"Very good; thank you," said he, flashing a tiger's glare at his wife. "Jean," he added, turning to his confidential valet, "you can serve my meals here in Madame de Merret's room. She is ill, and I shall not leave her till she recovers."

'The cruel man remained in his wife's room for twenty days. During the earlier time, when there was some little noise in the closet, and Josephine wanted to intercede for the dying man, he said, without allowing her to utter a word, "You swore on the Cross that there was no one there."'

After this story all the ladies rose from table, and thus the spell under which Bianchon had held them was broken. But there were some among them who had almost shivered at the last words.

PEACE IN THE HOUSE

Dedicated to my dear niece Valentine Surville.

THE incident recorded in this sketch took place towards the end of the month of November 1809, the moment when Napoleon's fugitive empire attained the apogee of its splendour. The trumpet-blasts of Wagram were still sounding an echo in the heart of the Austrian monarchy. Peace was being signed between France and the Coalition. Kings and princes came to perform their orbits, like stars, round Napoleon, who gave himself the pleasure of dragging all Europe in his train—a magnificent experiment in the power he afterwards displayed at Dresden. Never, as contemporaries tell us, did Paris see entertainments more superb than those which preceded and followed the sovereign's marriage with an Austrian archduchess. Never, in the most splendid days of the Monarchy, had so many crowned heads thronged the shores of the Seine, never had the French aristocracy been so rich or so splendid. The diamonds lavishly scattered over the women's dresses, and the gold and silver embroidery on the uniforms contrasted so strongly with the penury of the Republic, that the wealth of the globe seemed to be rolling through the drawing-rooms of Paris. Intoxication seemed to have turned the brains of this Empire of a day. All the military, not excepting their chief, revelled like parvenus in the treasure conquered for them by a

million men with worsted epaulettes, whose demands were satisfied by a few yards of red ribbon.

At this time most women affected that lightness of conduct and facility of morals which distinguished the reign of Louis XV. Whether it were in imitation of the tone of the fallen monarchy, or because certain members of the Imperial family had set the example—as certain malcontents of the Faubourg Saint-Germain chose to say—it is certain that men and women alike flung themselves into a life of pleasure with an intrepidity which seemed to forebode the end of the world. But there was at that time another cause for such licence. The infatuation of women for the military became a frenzy, and was too consonant to the Emperor's views for him to try to check it. The frequent calls to arms, which gave every treaty concluded between Napoleon and the rest of Europe the character of an armistice, left every passion open to a termination as sudden as the decisions of the Commander-in-chief of all these busbys, pelisses, and aiguillettes, which so fascinated the fair sex. Hearts were as nomadic as the regiments. Between the first and the fifth bulletin from the *Grande Armée* a woman might be in succession mistress, wife, mother, and widow.

Was it the prospect of early widowhood, the hope of a jointure, or that of bearing a name promised to history, which made the soldiers so attractive? Were women drawn to them by the certainty that the secret of their passions would be buried on the field of battle? or may we find the reason of this gentle fanaticism in the noble charm that courage has for a woman? Perhaps all these reasons, which the future historian of the manners of the Empire will no doubt amuse himself by weighing, counted for something in their facile readiness to abandon themselves to love intrigues. Be that as it may, it must here be confessed that at that time laurels hid many errors, women showed an ardent preference for the brave adventurers, whom they regarded as the true fount of honour,

wealth, or pleasure; and in the eyes of young girls, an epaulette—the hieroglyphic of a future—signified happiness and liberty.

One feature, and a characteristic one, of this unique period in our history was an unbridled mania for everything glittering. Never were fireworks so much in vogue, never were diamonds so highly prized. The men, as greedy as the women of these translucent pebbles, displayed them no less lavishly. Possibly the necessity for carrying plunder in the most portable form made gems the fashion in the army. A man was not ridiculous then, as he would be now, if his shirt-frill or his fingers blazed with large diamonds. Murat, an Oriental by nature, set the example of preposterous luxury to modern soldiers.

The Comte de Gondreville, formerly known as Citizen Malin, whose elevation had made him famous, having become a Lucullus of the Conservative Senate, which 'conserved' nothing, had postponed an entertainment in honour of the peace only that he might the better pay his court to Napoleon by his efforts to eclipse those flatterers who had been beforehand with him. The ambassadors from all the Powers friendly with France, with an eye to favours to come, the most important personages of the Empire, and even a few princes, were at this hour assembled in the wealthy senator's drawing-rooms. Dancing flagged; every one was watching for the Emperor, whose presence the Count had promised his guests. And Napoleon would have kept his word but for the scene which had broken out that very evening between him and Josephine—the scene which portended the impending divorce of the august pair. The report of this incident, at the time kept very secret, but recorded by history, did not reach the ears of the courtiers, and had no effect on the gaiety of Comte de Gondreville's party beyond keeping Napoleon away.

The prettiest women in Paris, eager to be at the

Count's on the strength of mere hearsay, at this moment were a besieging force of luxury, coquettishness, elegance, and beauty. The financial world, proud of its riches, challenged the splendour of the generals and high officials of the Empire, so recently gorged with orders, titles, and honours. These grand balls were always an opportunity seized upon by wealthy families for introducing their heiresses to Napoleon's Praetorian Guard, in the foolish hope of exchanging their splendid fortunes for uncertain favours. The women who believed themselves strong enough in their beauty alone came to test their power. There, as elsewhere, amusement was but a blind. Calm and smiling faces and placid brows covered sordid interests, expressions of friendship were a lie, and more than one man was less distrustful of his enemies than of his friends.

These remarks are necessary to explain the incidents of the little imbroglio which is the subject of this study, and the picture, softened as it is, of the tone then dominant in Paris drawing-rooms.

'Turn your eyes a little towards the pedestal supporting that candelabrum—do you see a young lady with her hair drawn back *à la Chinoise!*—There, in the corner to the left; she has bluebells in the knot of chestnut curls which fall in clusters on her head. Do not you see her? She is so pale you might fancy she was ill, delicate-looking, and very small; there—now she is turning her head this way; her almond-shaped blue eyes, so delightfully soft, look as if they were made expressly for tears. Look, look! She is bending forward to see Madame de Vaudremont below the crowd of heads in constant motion; the high head-dresses prevent her having a clear view.'

'I see her now, my dear fellow. You had only to say that she had the whitest skin of all the women here; I should have known whom you meant. I had noticed her before; she has the loveliest complexion I ever

admired. From hence I defy you to see against her throat the pearls between the sapphires of her necklace. But she is a prude or a coquette, for the tucker of her bodice scarcely lets one suspect the beauty of her bust. What shoulders! what lily-whiteness!'

'Who is she?' asked the first speaker.

'Ah! that I do not know.'

'Aristocrat!—Do you want to keep them all to yourself, Montcornet?'

'You of all men to banter me!' replied Montcornet, with a smile. 'Do you think you have a right to insult a poor general like me because, being a happy rival of Soulanges, you cannot even turn on your heel without alarming Madame de Vaudremont? Or is it because I came only a month ago into the Promised Land? How insolent you can be, you men in office, who sit glued to your chairs while we are dodging shot and shell! Come, Monsieur le Maître des Requêtes, allow us to glean in the field of which you can only have precarious possession from the moment when we evacuate it. The deuce is in it! We have all a right to live! My good friend, if you knew the German women, you would, I believe, do me a good turn with the Parisian you love best.'

'Well, General, since you have vouchsafed to turn your attention to that lady, whom I never saw till now, have the charity to tell me if you have seen her dance.'

'Why, my dear Martial, where have you dropped from? If you are ever sent with an embassy, I have small hopes of your success. Do not you see a triple rank of the most undaunted coquettes of Paris between her and the swarm of dancing men that buzz under the chandelier? And was it not only by the help of your eyeglass that you were able to discover her at all in the corner by that pillar, where she seems buried in the gloom, in spite of the candles blazing above her head? Between her and us there is such a sparkle of diamonds and glances, so many floating plumes, such a flutter of

lace, of flowers and curls, that it would be a real miracle if any dancer could detect her among those stars. Why, Martial, how is it that you have not understood her to be the wife of some sous-préfet from Lippe or Dyle, who has come to try to get her husband promoted?'

'Oh, he will be!' exclaimed the Master of Appeals quickly.

'I doubt it,' replied the Colonel of Cuirassiers, laughing. 'She seems as raw in intrigue as you are in diplomacy. I dare bet, Martial, that you do not know how she got into that place.'

The lawyer looked at the Colonel of Cuirassiers with an expression as much of contempt as of curiosity.

'Well,' proceeded Montcornet, 'she arrived, I have no doubt, punctually at nine, the first of the company perhaps, and probably she greatly embarrassed the Comtesse de Gondreville, who cannot put two ideas together. Repulsed by the mistress of the house, routed from chair to chair by each new-comer, and driven into the darkness of this little corner, she allowed herself to be walled in, the victim of the jealousy of the other ladies, who would gladly have buried that dangerous beauty. She had, of course, no friend to encourage her to maintain the place she first held in the front rank; then each of those treacherous fair ones would have enjoined on the men of her circle on no account to take out our poor friend, under pain of the severest punishment. That, my dear fellow, is the way in which those sweet faces, in appearance so tender and so artless, would have formed a coalition against the stranger, and that without a word beyond the question, "Tell me, dear, do you know that little woman in blue?"—Look here, Martial, if you care to run the gauntlet of more flattering glances and inviting questions than you will ever again meet in the whole of your life, just try to get through the triple rampart which defends that Queen of Dyle, or Lippe, or Charente. You will see whether the dullest woman of them all will

not be equal to inventing some wile that would hinder the most determined man from bringing the plaintive stranger to the light. Does it not strike you that she looks like an elegy?'

'Do you think so, Montcornet? Then she must be a married woman?'

'Why not a widow?'

'She would be less passive,' said the lawyer, laughing.

'She is perhaps the widow of a man who is gambling,' replied the handsome Colonel.

'To be sure; since the peace there are so many widows of that class!' said Martial. 'But, my dear Montcornet, we are a couple of simpletons. That face is still too ingenuous, there is too much youth and freshness on the brow and temples for her to be married. What splendid flesh-tints! Nothing has sunk in the modelling of the nose. Lips, chin, everything in her face is as fresh as a white rosebud, though the expression is veiled, as it were, by the clouds of sadness. Who can it be that makes that young creature weep?'

'Women cry for so little,' said the Colonel.

'I do not know,' replied Martial; 'but she does not cry because she is left there without a partner; her grief is not of to-day. It is evident that she has beautified herself for this evening with intention. I would wager that she is in love already.'

'Bah! She is perhaps the daughter of some German princeling; no one talks to her,' said Montcornet.

'Dear! how unhappy a poor child may be!' Martial went on. 'Can there be anything more graceful and refined than our little stranger? Well, not one of those furies who stand round her, and who believe that they can feel, will say a word to her. If she would but speak, we should see if she has fine teeth.'

'Bless me, you boil over like milk at the least increase of temperature?' cried the Colonel, a little nettled at so soon finding a rival in his friend.

'What!' exclaimed the lawyer, without heeding the General's question. 'Can nobody here tell us the name of this exotic flower?'

'Some lady companion!' said Montcornet.

'What next? A companion! wearing sapphires fit for a queen, and a dress of Malines lace? Tell that to the marines, General. You, too, would not shine in diplomacy if, in the course of your conjectures, you jump in a breath from a German princess to a lady companion.'

Montcornet stopped a man by taking his arm—a fat little man, whose iron-grey hair and clever eyes were to be seen at the lintel of every doorway, and who mingled unceremoniously with the various groups which welcomed him respectfully.

'Gondreville, my friend,' said Montcornet, 'who is that quite charming little woman sitting out there under that huge candelabrum?'

'The candelabrum? Ravrio's work; Isabey made the design.'

'Oh, I recognised your lavishness and taste; but the lady?'

'Ah! I do not know. Some friend of my wife's, no doubt.'

'Or your mistress, you old rascal.'

'No, on my honour. The Comtesse de Gondreville is the only person capable of inviting people whom no one knows.'

In spite of this very acrimonious comment, the fat little man's lips did not lose the smile which the Colonel's suggestion had brought to them. Montcornet returned to the lawyer, who had joined a neighbouring group, intent on asking, but in vain, for information as to the fair unknown. He grasped Martial's arm, and said in his ear—

'My dear Martial, mind what you are about. Madame de Vaudremont has been watching you for some minutes

with ominous attentiveness; she is a woman who can guess by the mere movement of your lips what you say to me; our eyes have already told her too much; she has perceived and followed their direction, and I suspect that at this moment she is thinking even more than we are of the little blue lady.'

'That is too old a trick in warfare, my dear Montcornet! However, what do I care? Like the Emperor, when I have made a conquest, I keep it.'

'Martial, your fatuity cries out for a lesson. What! you, a civilian, and so lucky as to be the husband-designate of Madame de Vaudremont, a widow of two-and-twenty, burthened with four thousand napoleons a year—a woman who slips such a diamond as this on your finger,' he added, taking the lawyer's left hand, which the young man complacently allowed; 'and, to crown all, you affect the Lovelace, just as if you were a colonel and obliged to keep up the reputation of the military in home quarters! Fie, fie! Only think of all you may lose.'

'At any rate, I shall not lose my liberty,' replied Martial, with a forced laugh.

He cast a passionate glance at Madame de Vaudremont, who responded only by a smile of some uneasiness, for she had seen the Colonel examining the lawyer's ring.

'Listen to me, Martial. If you flutter round my young stranger, I shall set to work to win Madame de Vaudremont.'

'You have my full permission, my dear Cuirassier, but you will not gain this much,' and the young Maître des Requêtes put his polished thumb-nail under an upper tooth with a little mocking click.

'Remember that I am unmarried,' said the Colonel; 'that my sword is my whole fortune; and that such a challenge is setting Tantalus down to a banquet which he will devour.'

'Prrr.'

This defiant roll of consonants was the only reply to

the General's declaration, as Martial looked him from head to foot before turning away.

The fashion of the time required men to wear at a ball white kerseymere breeches and silk stockings. This pretty costume showed to great advantage the perfection of Montcornet's fine shape. He was five-and-thirty, and attracted attention by his stalwart height, insisted on for the Cuirassiers of the Imperial Guard whose handsome uniform enhanced the dignity of his figure, still youthful in spite of the stoutness occasioned by living on horseback. A black moustache emphasised the frank expression of a thoroughly soldierly countenance, with a broad, high forehead, an aquiline nose, and bright red lips. Montcornet's manner, stamped with a certain superiority due to the habit of command, might please a woman sensible enough not to aim at making a slave of her husband. The Colonel smiled as he looked at the lawyer, one of his favourite college friends, whose small figure made it necessary for Montcornet to look down a little as he answered his raillery with a friendly glance.

Baron Martial de la Roche-Hugon was a young Provençal patronised by Napoleon; his fate might probably be some splendid embassy. He had won the Emperor by his Italian suppleness and a genius for intrigue, a drawing-room eloquence, and a knowledge of manners, which are so good a substitute for the higher qualities of a sterling man. Though young and eager, his face had already acquired the rigid brilliancy of tinned iron, one of the indispensable characteristics of diplomatists, which allows them to conceal their emotions and disguise their feelings, unless, indeed, this impassibility indicates an absence of all emotion and the death of every feeling. The heart of a diplomate may be regarded as an insoluble problem, for the three most illustrious ambassadors of the time have been distinguished by perdurable hatreds and most romantic attachments.

Martial, however, was one of those men who are capable of reckoning on the future in the midst of their intensest enjoyment; he had already learned to judge the world, and hid his ambition under the fatuity of a lady-killer, cloaking his talent under the commonplace of mediocrity as soon as he observed the rapid advancement of those men who gave the master little umbrage.

The two friends now had to part with a cordial grasp of hands. The introductory tune, warning the ladies to form in squares for a fresh quadrille, cleared the men away from the space they had filled while talking in the middle of the large room. This hurried dialogue had taken place during the usual interval between two dances, in front of the fireplace of the great drawing-room of Gondreville's mansion. The questions and answers of this very ordinary ball-room gossip had been almost whispered by each of the speakers into his neighbour's ear. At the same time, the chandeliers and the flambeaux on the chimney-shelf shed such a flood of light on the two friends that their faces, strongly illuminated, failed, in spite of their diplomatic discretion, to conceal the faint expression of their feelings either from the keen-sighted countess or the artless stranger. This espionage of people's thoughts is perhaps to idle persons one of the pleasures they find in society, while numbers of disappointed numskulls are bored there without daring to own it.

Fully to appreciate the interest of this conversation, it is necessary to relate an incident which would presently serve as an invisible bond, drawing together the actors in this little drama, who were at present scattered through the rooms.

At about eleven o'clock, just as the dancers were returning to their seats, the company had observed the entrance of the handsomest woman in Paris, the queen of fashion, the only person wanting to this brilliant

assembly. She made it a rule never to appear till the moment when a party had reached that pitch of excited movement which does not allow the women to preserve much longer the freshness of their faces or of their dress. This brief hour is, as it were, the springtime of a ball. An hour after, when pleasure falls flat and fatigue is encroaching, everything is spoilt. Madame de Vaudremont never committed the blunder of remaining at a party to be seen with drooping flowers, hair out of curl, tumbled frills, and a face like every other that sleep is courting—not always without success. She took good care not to let her beauty be seen drowsy, as her rivals did; she was so clever as to keep up her reputation for smartness by always leaving a ballroom in brilliant order, as she had entered it. Women whispered to each other with a feeling of envy that she planned and wore as many different dresses as the parties she went to in one evening.

On the present occasion Madame de Vaudremont was not destined to be free to leave when she would the ballroom she had entered in triumph. Pausing for a moment on the threshold, she shot swift but observant glances on the women present, hastily scrutinising their dresses to assure herself that her own eclipsed them all.

The illustrious beauty presented herself to the admiration of the crowd at the same moment with one of the bravest colonels of the Guards' Artillery and the Emperor's favourite, the Comte de Soulanges. The transient and fortuitous association of these two had about it a certain air of mystery. On hearing the names announced of Monsieur de Soulanges and the Comtesse de Vaudremont, a few women sitting by the wall rose, and men, hurrying in from the side-rooms, pressed forward to the principal doorway. One of the jesters who are always to be found in any large assembly said, as the Countess and her escort came in, that 'women had quite as much curiosity about seeing a man who was faithful to his

passion as men had in studying a woman who was difficult to enthrall.'

Though the Comte de Soulanges, a young man of about two-and-thirty, was endowed with the nervous temperament which in a man gives rise to fine qualities, his slender build and pale complexion were not at first sight attractive; his black eyes betrayed great vivacity, but he was taciturn in company, and there was nothing in his appearance to reveal the gift for oratory which subsequently distinguished him, on the Right, in the legislative assembly under the Restoration.

The Comtesse de Vaudremont, a tall woman, rather fat, with a skin of dazzling whiteness, a small head that she carried well, and the immense advantage of inspiring love by the graciousness of her manner, was one of those beings who keep all the promise of their beauty.

The pair, who for a few minutes were the centre of general observation, did not for long give curiosity an opportunity of exercising itself about them. The Colonel and the Countess seemed perfectly to understand that accident had placed them in an awkward position. Martial, as they came forward, had hastened to join the group of men by the fireplace, that he might watch Madame de Vaudremont with the jealous anxiety of the first flame of passion, from behind the heads which formed a sort of rampart; a secret voice seemed to warn him that the success on which he prided himself might perhaps be precarious. But the coldly polite smile with which the Countess thanked Monsieur de Soulanges, and her little bow of dismissal as she sat down by Madame de Gondreville, relaxed the muscles of his face which jealousy had made rigid. Seeing Soulanges, however, still standing quite near the sofa on which Madame de Vaudremont was seated, not apparently having understood the glance by which the lady had conveyed to him that they were both playing a ridiculous part, the volcanic Provençal again knit the black brows that overshadowed his

blue eyes, smoothed his chestnut curls to keep himself in countenance, and without betraying the agitation which made his heart beat, watched the faces of the Countess and of M. de Soulanges while still chatting with his neighbours. He then took the hand of Colonel Montcornet, who had just renewed their old acquaintance, but he listened to him without hearing him; his mind was elsewhere.

Soulanges was gazing calmly at the women, sitting four ranks deep all round the immense ballroom, admiring this dado of diamonds, rubies, masses of gold and shining hair, of which the lustre almost outshone the blaze of waxlights, the cut glass of the chandeliers, and the gilding. His rival's stolid indifference put the lawyer out of countenance. Quite incapable of controlling his secret transports of impatience, Martial went towards Madame de Vaudremont with a bow. On seeing the Provençal, Soulanges gave him a covert glance, and impertinently turned away his head. Solemn silence now reigned in the room, where curiosity was at the highest pitch. All these eager faces wore the strangest mixed expressions; every one apprehended one of those outbreaks which men of breeding carefully avoid. Suddenly the Count's pale face turned as red as the scarlet facings of his coat, and he fixed his gaze on the floor that the cause of his agitation might not be guessed. On catching sight of the unknown lady humbly seated by the pedestal of the candelabrum, he moved away with a melancholy air, passing in front of the lawyer, and took refuge in one of the card-rooms. Martial and all the company thought that Soulanges had publicly surrendered the post, out of fear of the ridicule which invariably attaches to a discarded lover. The lawyer proudly raised his head and looked at the strange lady; then, as he took his seat at his ease near Madame de Vaudremont, he listened to her so inattentively that he did not catch these words spoken behind her fan—

'Martial, you will oblige me this evening by not wearing that ring that you snatched from me. I have my reasons, and will explain them to you in a moment when we go away. You must give me your arm to go to the Princesse de Wagram's.'

'Why did you come in with the Colonel?' asked the Baron.

'I met him in the hall,' she replied. 'But leave me now; everybody is looking at us.'

Martial returned to the Colonel of Cuirassiers. Then it was that the little blue lady had become the object of the curiosity which agitated in such various ways the Colonel, Soulanges, Martial, and Madame de Vaudremont.

When the friends parted, after the challenge which closed their conversation, the Baron flew to Madame de Vaudremont, and led her to a place in the most brilliant quadrille. Favoured by the sort of intoxication which dancing always produces in a woman, and by the turmoil of a ball, where men appear in all the trickery of dress, which adds no less to their attractions than it does to those of women, Martial thought he might yield with impunity to the charm that attracted his gaze to the fair stranger. Though he succeeded in hiding his first glances towards the lady in blue from the anxious activity of the Countess's eyes, he was ere long caught in the fact; and though he managed to excuse himself once for his absence of mind, he could not justify the unseemly silence with which he presently heard the most insinuating question which a woman can put to a man—

'Do you like me very much this evening?'

And the more dreamy he became, the more the Countess pressed and teased him.

While Martial was dancing, the Colonel moved from group to group, seeking information about the unknown lady. After exhausting the good-humour even of the most indifferent, he had resolved to take advantage of a

moment when the Comtesse de Gondreville seemed to be at liberty, to ask her the name of the mysterious lady, when he perceived a little space left clear between the pedestal of the candelabrum and the two sofas, which ended in that corner. The dance had left several of the chairs vacant, which formed rows of fortifications held by mothers or women of middle age; and the Colonel seized the opportunity to make his way through this palisade hung with shawls and wraps. He began by making himself agreeable to the dowagers, and so from one to another, and from compliment to compliment, he at last reached the empty space next the stranger. At the risk of catching on to the gryphons and chimæras of the huge candelabrum, he stood there, braving the glare and dropping of the wax candles, to Martial's extreme annoyance.

The Colonel, far too tactful to speak suddenly to the little blue lady on his right, began by saying to a plain woman who was seated on the left—

'This is a splendid ball, Madame! What luxury! What life! On my word, every woman here is pretty! You are not dancing—because you do not care for it, no doubt.'

This vapid conversation was solely intended to induce his right-hand neighbour to speak; but she, silent and absent-minded, paid not the least attention. The officer had in store a number of phrases which he intended should lead up to: 'And you, Madame?'—a question from which he hoped great things. But he was strangely surprised to see tears in the strange lady's eyes, which seemed wholly absorbed in gazing on Madame de Vaudremont.

'You are married, no doubt, Madame?' he asked her at length, in hesitating tones.

'Yes, Monsieur,' replied the lady.

'And your husband is here, of course?'

'Yes, Monsieur.'

'And why, Madame, do you remain in this spot? Is it to attract attention?'

The mournful lady smiled sadly.

'Allow me the honour, Madame, of being your partner in the next quadrille, and I will take care not to bring you back here. I see a vacant settee near the fire; come and take it. When so many people are ready to ascend the throne, and Royalty is the mania of the day, I cannot imagine that you will refuse the title of Queen of the Ball which your beauty may claim.'

'I do not intend to dance, Monsieur.'

The curt tone of the lady's replies was so discouraging that the Colonel found himself compelled to raise the siege. Martial, who guessed what the officer's last request had been, and the refusal he had met with, began to smile, and stroked his chin, making the diamond sparkle which he wore on his finger.

'What are you laughing at?' said the Comtesse de Vaudremont.

'At the failure of the poor Colonel, who has just put his foot in it——'

'I begged you to take your ring off,' said the Countess, interrupting him.

'I did not hear you.'

'If you can hear nothing this evening, at any rate you see everything, Monsieur le Baron,' said Madame de Vaudremont, with an air of vexation.

'That young man is displaying a very fine diamond,' the stranger remarked to the Colonel.

'Splendid,' he replied. 'The man is the Baron Martial de la Roche-Hugon, one of my most intimate friends.'

'I have to thank you for telling me his name,' she went on; 'he seems an agreeable man.'

'Yes, but he is rather fickle.'

'He seems to be on the best terms with the Comtesse de Vaudremont?' said the lady, with an inquiring look at the Colonel.

'On the very best.'

The unknown turned pale.

'Hallo!' thought the soldier, 'she is in love with that lucky devil Martial.'

'I fancied that Madame de Vaudremont had long been devoted to M. de Soulanges,' said the lady, recovering a little from the suppressed grief which had clouded the fairness of her face.

'For a week past the Countess has been faithless,' replied the Colonel. 'But you must have seen poor Soulanges when he came in; he is still trying to disbelieve in his disaster.'

'Yes, I saw him,' said the lady. Then she added, 'Thank you very much, Monsieur,' in a tone which signified a dismissal.

At this moment the quadrille was coming to an end. Montcornet had only time to withdraw, saying to himself by way of consolation, 'She is married.'

'Well, valiant Cuirassier,' exclaimed the Baron, drawing the Colonel aside into a window-bay to breathe the fresh air from the garden, 'how are you getting on?'

'She is a married woman, my dear fellow.'

'What does that matter?'

'Oh, deuce take it! I am a decent sort of man, replied the Colonel. 'I have no idea of paying my addresses to a woman I cannot marry. Besides, Martial, she expressly told me that she did not intend to dance.'

'Colonel, I will bet a hundred napoleons to your grey horse that she will dance with me this evening.'

'Done!' said the Colonel, putting his hand in the coxcomb's. 'Meanwhile I am going to look for Soulanges; he perhaps knows the lady, as she seems interested in him.'

'You have lost, my good fellow,' cried Martial, laughing. 'My eyes have met hers, and I know what they mean. My dear friend, you owe me no grudge for dancing with her after she has refused you?'

'No, no. Those who laugh last, laugh longest. But I am an honest gambler and a generous enemy, Martial, and I warn you, she is fond of diamonds.'

With these words the friends parted; General Montcornet made his way to the cardroom, where he saw the Comte de Soulanges sitting at a *bouillotte* table. Though there was no friendship between the two soldiers, beyond the superficial comradeship arising from the perils of war and the duties of the service, the Colonel of Cuirassiers was painfully struck by seeing the Colonel of Artillery, whom he knew to be a prudent man, playing at a game which might bring him to ruin. The heaps of gold and notes piled on the fateful cards showed the frenzy of play. A circle of silent men stood round the players at the table. Now and then a few words were spoken—*pass*, *play*, *I stop*, *a thousand louis*, *taken*—but, looking at the five motionless men, it seemed as though they talked only with their eyes. As the Colonel, alarmed by Soulanges' pallor, went up to him, the Count was winning. Field-Marshal the Duc d'Isemberg, Keller, and a famous banker rose from the table completely cleaned out of considerable sums. Soulanges looked gloomier than ever as he swept up a quantity of gold and notes; he did not even count it; his lips curled with bitter scorn, he seemed to defy fortune rather than be grateful for her favours.

'Courage,' said the Colonel. 'Courage, Soulanges!' Then, believing he would do him a service by dragging him from play, he added: 'Come with me. I have some good news for you, but on one condition.'

'What is that?' asked Soulanges.

'That you will answer a question I will ask you.'

The Comte de Soulanges rose abruptly, placing his winnings with reckless indifference in his handkerchief, which he had been twisting with convulsive nervousness, and his expression was so savage that none of the players took exception to his walking off with their money.

Indeed, every face seemed to dilate with relief when his morose and crabbed countenance was no longer to be seen under the circle of light which a shaded lamp casts on a gaming table.

'Those fiends of soldiers are always as thick as thieves at a fair!' said a diplomate who had been looking on, as he took Soulanges' place. One single pallid and fatigued face turned to the new-comer, and said with a glance that flashed and died out like the sparkle of a diamond: 'When we say military, we do not mean civil, Monsieur le Ministre.'

'My dear fellow,' said Montcornet to Soulanges, leading him into a corner, 'the Emperor spoke warmly in your praise this morning, and your promotion to be field-marshal is a certainty.'

'The Master does not love the Artillery.'

'No, but he adores the nobility, and you are an aristocrat. The Master said,' added Montcornet, 'that the men who had married in Paris during the campaign were not therefore to be considered in disgrace. Well then?'

The Comte de Soulanges looked as if he understood nothing of this speech.

'And now I hope,' the Colonel went on, 'that you will tell me if you know a charming little woman who is sitting under a huge candelabrum——'

At these words the Count's face lighted up; he violently seized the Colonel's hand: 'My dear General,' said he, in a perceptibly altered voice, 'if any man but you had asked me such a question, I would have cracked his skull with this mass of gold. Leave me, I entreat you. I feel more like blowing out my brains this evening, I assure you, than—— I hate everything I see. And, in fact, I am going. This gaiety, this music, these stupid faces, all laughing, are killing me!'

'My poor friend!' replied Montcornet gently, and giving the Count's hand a friendly pressure, 'you are

too vehement. What would you say if I told you that Martial is thinking so little of Madame de Vaudremont that he is quite smitten with that little lady?'

'If he says a word to her,' cried Soulanges, stammering with rage, 'I will thrash him as flat as his own portfolio, even if the coxcomb were in the Emperor's lap!'

And he sank quite overcome on an easy-chair to which Montcornet had led him. The Colonel slowly went away, for he perceived that Soulanges was in a state of fury far too violent for the pleasantries or the attentions of superficial friendship to soothe him.

When Montcornet returned to the ballroom, Madame de Vaudremont was the first person on whom his eyes fell, and he observed on her face, usually so calm, some symptoms of ill-disguised agitation. A chair was vacant near hers, and the Colonel seated himself.

'I dare wager something has vexed you?' said he.

'A mere trifle, General. I want to be gone, for I have promised to go to a ball at the Grand Duchess of Berg's, and I must look in first at the Princesse de Wagram's. Monsieur de la Roche-Hugon, who knows this, is amusing himself by flirting with the dowagers.'

'That is not the whole secret of your disturbance, and I will bet a hundred louis that you will remain here the whole evening.'

'Impertinent man!'

'Then I have hit the truth?'

'Well, tell me, what am I thinking of?' said the Countess, tapping the Colonel's fingers with her fan. 'I might even reward you if you guess rightly.'

'I will not accept the challenge; I have too much the advantage of you.'

'You are presumptuous.'

'You are afraid of seeing Martial at the feet——'

'Of whom?' cried the Countess, affecting surprise.

'Of that candelabrum,' replied the Colonel, glancing

at the fair stranger, and then looking at the Countess with embarrassing scrutiny.

'You have guessed it,' replied the coquette, hiding her face behind her fan, which she began to play with. 'Old Madame de Lansac, who is, you know, as malicious as an old monkey,' she went on, after a pause, 'has just told me that Monsieur de la Roche-Hugon is running into danger by flirting with that stranger, who sits here this evening like a skeleton at a feast. I would rather see a death's head than that face, so cruelly beautiful, and as pale as a ghost. She is my evil genius.—Madame de Lansac,' she added, after a flash and gesture of annoyance, 'who only goes to a ball to watch everything while pretending to sleep, has made me miserably anxious. Martial shall pay dearly for playing me such a trick. Urge him, meanwhile, since he is your friend, not to make me so unhappy.'

'I have just been with a man who promises to blow his brains out, and nothing less, if he speaks to that little lady. And he is the man, Madame, to keep his word. But then I know Martial; such threats are to him an encouragement. And, besides, we have wagered——' Here the Colonel lowered his voice.

'Can it be true?' said the Countess.

'On my word of honour.'

'Thank you, my dear Colonel,' replied Madame de Vaudremont, with a glance full of invitation.

'Will you do me the honour of dancing with me?'

'Yes; but the next quadrille. During this one I want to find out what will come of this little intrigue, and to ascertain who the little blue lady may be; she looks intelligent.'

The Colonel, understanding that Madame de Vaudremont wished to be alone, retired, well content to have begun his attack so well.

At most entertainments women are to be met who

are there, like Madame de Lansac, as old sailors gather on the seashore to watch younger mariners struggling with the tempest. At this moment Madame de Lansac, who seemed to be interested in the personages of this drama, could easily guess the agitation which the Countess was going through. The lady might fan herself gracefully, smile on the young men who bowed to her, and bring into play all the arts by which a woman hides her emotion,—the Dowager, one of the most clear-sighted and mischief-loving duchesses bequeathed by the eighteenth century to the nineteenth, could read her heart and mind through it all.

The old lady seemed to detect the slightest movement that revealed the impressions of the soul. The imperceptible frown that furrowed that calm, pure forehead, the faintest quiver of the cheeks, the curve of the eyebrows, the least curl of the lips, whose living coral could conceal nothing from her, all these were to the Duchess like the print of a book. From the depths of her large arm-chair, completely filled by the flow of her dress, the coquette of the past, while talking to a diplomate who had sought her out to hear the anecdotes she told so cleverly, was admiring herself in the younger coquette; she felt kindly to her, seeing how bravely she disguised her annoyance and grief of heart. Madame de Vaudremont, in fact, felt as much sorrow as she feigned cheerfulness; she had believed that she had found in Martial a man of talent on whose support she could count for adorning her life with all the enchantment of power; and at this moment she perceived her mistake, as injurious to her reputation as to her good opinion of herself. In her, as in other women of that time, the suddenness of their passions increased their vehemence. Souls which love much and love often, suffer no less than those which burn themselves out in one affection. Her liking for Martial was but of yesterday, it is true, but the least experienced surgeon knows that the pain caused by the

amputation of a healthy limb is more acute than the removal of a diseased one. There was a future before Madame de Vaudremont's passion for Martial, while her previous love had been hopeless, and poisoned by Soulanges' remorse.

The old Duchess, who was watching for an opportunity of speaking to the Countess, hastened to dismiss her Ambassador; for in comparison with a lovers' quarrel every interest pales, even with an old woman. To engage battle, Madame de Lansac shot at the younger lady a sardonic glance which made the Countess fear lest her fate was in the dowager's hands. There are looks between woman and woman which are like the torches brought on at the climax of a tragedy. No one who had not known that Duchess could appreciate the terror which the expression of her countenance inspired in the Countess.

Madame de Lansac was tall, and her features led people to say, 'That must have been a handsome woman!' She coated her cheeks so thickly with rouge that the wrinkles were scarcely visible; but her eyes, far from gaining a factitious brilliancy from this strong carmine, looked all the more dim. She wore a vast quantity of diamonds, and dressed with sufficient taste not to make herself ridiculous. Her sharp nose promised epigram. A well-fitted set of teeth preserved a smile of such irony as recalled that of Voltaire. At the same time, the exquisite politeness of her manners so effectually softened the mischievous twist in her mind, that it was impossible to accuse her of spitefulness.

The old woman's eyes lighted up, and a triumphant glance, seconded by a smile, which said, 'I promised you as much!' shot across the room, and brought a blush of hope to the pale cheeks of the young creature languishing under the great chandelier. This alliance between Madame de Lansac and the stranger could not escape the practised eye of the Comtesse de Vaudremont,

who scented a mystery, and was determined to penetrate it.

At this instant the Baron de la Roche-Hugon, after questioning all the dowagers without success as to the blue lady's name, applied in despair to the Comtesse de Gondreville, from whom he received only this unsatisfactory reply, 'A lady whom the "ancient" Duchesse de Lansac introduced to me.'

Turning by chance towards the armchair occupied by the old lady, the lawyer intercepted the glance of intelligence she sent to the stranger; and although he had for some time been on bad terms with her, he determined to speak to her. The 'ancient' Duchess, seeing the jaunty Baron prowling round her chair, smiled with sardonic irony, and looked at Madame de Vaudremont with an expression that made Montcornet laugh.

'If the old witch affects to be friendly,' thought the Baron, 'she is certainly going to play me some spiteful trick.—Madame,' he said, 'you have, I am told, undertaken the charge of a very precious treasure.'

'Do you take me for a dragon?' said the old lady. 'But of whom are you speaking?' she added, with a sweetness which revived Martial's hopes.

'Of that little lady, unknown to all, whom the jealousy of all these coquettes has imprisoned in that corner. You, no doubt, know her family?'

'Yes,' said the Duchess. 'But what concern have you with a provincial heiress, married some time since, a woman of good birth whom you none of you know, you men; she goes nowhere.'

'Why does not she dance, she is such a pretty creature?—May we conclude a treaty of peace? If you will vouchsafe to tell me all I want to know, I promise you that a petition for the restitution of the woods of Navarreins by the Commissioners of Crown Lands shall be strongly urged on the Emperor.'

The younger branch of the house of Navarreins bears

quarterly with the arms of Navarreins those of Lansac, namely, azure and argent party per pale raguly, between six spear-heads in pale, and the old lady's liaison with Louis XV. had earned her husband the title of duke by royal patent. Now, as the Navarreins had not yet resettled in France, it was sheer trickery that the young lawyer thus proposed to the old lady by suggesting to her that she should petition for an estate belonging to the elder branch of the family.

'Monsieur,' said the old woman with deceptive gravity, 'bring the Comtesse de Vaudremont across to me. I promise you that I will reveal to her the mystery of the interesting unknown. You see, every man in the room has reached as great a curiosity as your own. All eyes are involuntarily turned towards the corner where my protégée has so modestly placed herself; she is reaping all the homage the women wished to deprive her of. Happy the man she chooses for her partner!' She interrupted herself, fixing her eyes on Madame de Vaudremont with one of those looks which plainly say, 'We are talking of you.'—Then she added, 'I imagine you would rather learn the stranger's name from the lips of your handsome Countess than from mine.'

There was such marked defiance in the Duchess's attitude that Madame de Vaudremont rose, came up to her, and took the chair Martial placed for her; then without noticing him she said, 'I can guess, Madame, that you are talking of me; but I admit my want of perspicacity; I do not know whether it is for good or evil.'

Madame de Lansac pressed the young woman's pretty hand in her own dry and wrinkled fingers, and answered in a low, compassionate tone, 'Poor child!'

The women looked at each other. Madame de Vaudremont understood that Martial was in the way, and dismissed him, saying with an imperious expression, 'Leave us.'

The Baron, ill pleased at seeing the Countess under the spell of the dangerous sibyl who had drawn her to her side, gave one of those looks which a man can give —potent over a blinded heart, but simply ridiculous in the eyes of a woman who is beginning to criticise the man who has attracted her.

'Do you think you can play the Emperor?' said Madame de Vaudremont, turning three-quarters of her face to fix an ironical sidelong gaze on the lawyer.

Martial was too much a man of the world, and had too much wit and acumen, to risk breaking with a woman who was in favour at Court, and whom the Emperor wished to see married. He counted, too, on the jealousy he intended to provoke in her as the surest means of discovering the secret of her coolness, and withdrew all the more willingly, because at this moment a new quadrille was putting everybody in motion.

With an air of making room for the dancing, the Baron leaned back against the marble slab of a console, folded his arms, and stood absorbed in watching the two ladies talking. From time to time he followed the glances which both frequently directed to the stranger. Then, comparing the Countess with the new beauty, made so attractive by a touch of mystery, the Baron fell a prey to the detestable self-interest common to adventurous lady-killers; he hesitated between a fortune within his grasp and the indulgence of his caprice. The blaze of light gave such strong relief to his anxious and sullen face, against the hangings of white silk moreen brushed by his black hair, that he might have been compared to an evil genius. Even from a distance more than one observer no doubt said to himself, 'There is another poor wretch who seems to be enjoying himself!'

The Colonel, meanwhile, with one shoulder leaning lightly against the side-post of the doorway between the ball-room and the card-room, could laugh undetected under his ample moustache; it amused him to look on at

the turmoil of the dance; he could see a hundred pretty heads turning about in obedience to the figures; he could read in some faces, as in those of the Countess and his friend Martial, the secrets of their agitation; and then, looking round, he wondered what connection there could be between the gloomy looks of the Comte de Soulanges, still seated on the sofa, and the plaintive expression of the fair unknown, on whose features the joys of hope and the anguish of involuntary dread were alternately legible. Montcornet stood like the king of the feast. In this moving picture he saw a complete presentment of the world, and he laughed at it as he found himself the object of inviting smiles from a hundred beautiful and elegant women. A Colonel of the Imperial Guard, a position equal to that of a Brigadier-General, was undoubtedly one of the best matches in the army.

It was now nearly midnight. The conversation, the gambling, the dancing, the flirtations, interests, petty rivalries, and scheming had all reached the pitch of ardour which makes a young man exclaim involuntarily, 'A fine ball!'

'My sweet little angel,' said Madame de Lansac to the Countess, 'you are now at an age when in my day I made many mistakes. Seeing you just now enduring a thousand deaths, it occurred to me that I might give you some charitable advice. To go wrong at two-and-twenty means spoiling your future; is it not tearing the gown you must wear? My dear, it is not till much later that we learn to go about in it without crumpling it. Go on, sweetheart, making clever enemies, and friends who have no sense of conduct, and you will see what a pleasant life you will some day be leading!'

'Oh, Madame, it is very hard for a woman to be happy, do not you think?' the Countess eagerly exclaimed.

'My child, at your age you must learn to choose between pleasure and happiness. You want to marry

Martial, who is not fool enough to make a good husband, nor passionate enough to remain a lover. He is in debt, my dear; he is the man to run through your fortune; still, that would be nothing if he could make you happy. —Do not you see how aged he is? The man must have been often ill; he is making the most of what is left him. In three years he will be a wreck. Then he will be ambitious; perhaps he may succeed. I do not think so.—What is he? A man of intrigue, who may have the business faculty to perfection, and be able to gossip agreeably; but he is too presumptuous to have any sterling merit; he will not go far. Besides—only look at him. Is it not written on his brow that, at this very moment, what he sees in you is not a young and pretty woman, but the two million francs you possess? He does not love you, my dear; he is reckoning you up as if you were an investment. If you are bent on marrying, find an older man who has an assured position and is half-way on his career. A widow's marriage ought not to be a trivial love affair. Is a mouse to be caught a second time in the same trap? A new alliance ought now to be a good speculation on your part, and in marrying again you ought at least to have a hope of being some day addressed as Madame la Maréchale.'

As she spoke both women naturally fixed their eyes on Colonel Montcornet's handsome face.

'If you would rather play the delicate part of a flirt and not marry again,' the Duchess went on, with blunt good-nature; 'well! my poor child, you, better than any woman, will know how to raise the storm-clouds and disperse them again. But, I beseech you, never make it your pleasure to disturb the peace of families, to destroy unions, and ruin the happiness of happy wives. I, my dear, have played that perilous game. Dear heaven! for a triumph of vanity some poor virtuous soul is murdered—for there really are virtuous women, child, —and we may make ourselves mortally hated. I learned,

a little too late, that, as the Duc d'Albe once said, one salmon is worth a thousand frogs! A genuine affection certainly brings a thousand times more happiness than the transient passions we may inspire.—Well, I came here on purpose to preach to you; yes, you are the cause of my appearance in this house, which stinks of the lower class. Have I not just seen actors here? Formerly, my dear, we received them in our boudoir; but in the drawing-room—never!—Why do you look at me with so much amazement? Listen to me. If you want to play with men, do not try to wring the hearts of any but those whose life is not yet settled, who have no duties to fulfil; the others do not forgive us for the errors that have made them happy. Profit by this maxim, founded on my long experience.—That luckless Soulanges, for instance, whose head you have turned, whom you have intoxicated for these fifteen months past, God knows how! Do you know at what you have struck?—At his whole life. He has been married these two years; he is worshipped by a charming wife, whom he loves, but neglects; she lives in tears and embittered silence. Soulanges has had hours of remorse more terrible than his pleasure has been sweet. And you, you artful little thing, have deserted him.—Well, come and see your work.'

The old lady took Madame de Vaudremont's hand, and they rose.

'There,' said Madame de Lansac, and her eyes showed her the stranger sitting pale and tremulous under the glare of the candles, 'that is my grand-niece, the Comtesse de Soulanges; to-day she yielded at last to my persuasion, and consented to leave the sorrowful room, where the sight of her child gives her but little consolation. You see her? You think her charming? Then imagine, dear Beauty, what she must have been when happiness and love shed their glory on that face now blighted.'

The Countess looked away in silence, and seemed lost in sad reflections.

The Duchess led her to the door into the card-room; then, after looking round the room as if in search of some one—'And there is Soulanges!' she said in deep tones.

The Countess shuddered as she saw, in the least brilliantly lighted corner, the pale, set face of Soulanges stretched in an easy-chair. The indifference of his attitude and the rigidity of his brow betrayed his suffering. The players passed him to and fro, without paying any more attention to him than if he had been dead. The picture of the wife in tears, and the dejected, morose husband, separated in the midst of this festivity like the two halves of a tree blasted by lightning, had perhaps a prophetic significance for the Countess. She dreaded lest she here saw an image of the revenges the future might have in store for her. Her heart was not yet so dried up that feeling and generosity were entirely excluded, and she pressed the Duchess's hand, while thanking her by one of those smiles which have a certain childlike grace.

'My dear child,' the old lady said in her ear, 'remember henceforth that we are just as capable of repelling a man's attentions as of attracting them.'

'She is yours if you are not a simpleton.' These words were whispered into Colonel Montcornet's ear by Madame de Lansac, while the handsome Countess was still absorbed in compassion at the sight of Soulanges, for she still loved him truly enough to wish to restore him to happiness, and was promising herself in her own mind that she would exert the irresistible power her charms still had over him to make him return to his wife.

'Oh! I will talk to him!' said she to Madame de Lansac.

'Do nothing of the kind, my dear!' cried the old

lady, as she went back to her armchair. 'Choose a good husband, and shut your door to my nephew. Believe me, my child, a wife cannot accept her husband's heart as the gift of another woman; she is a hundred times happier in the belief that she has re-conquered it. By bringing my niece here I believe I have given her an excellent chance of regaining her husband's affection. All the assistance I need of you is to play the Colonel.' She pointed to the Baron's friend, and the Countess smiled.

'Well, Madame, do you at last know the name of the unknown?' asked Martial, with an air of pique, to the Countess when he saw her alone.

'Yes,' said Madame de Vaudremont, looking him in the face.

Her features expressed as much roguery as fun. The smile which gave life to her lips and cheeks, the liquid brightness of her eyes, were like the will-o'-the-wisp which leads travellers astray. Martial, who believed that she still loved him, assumed the coquetting graces in which a man is so ready to lull himself in the presence of the woman he loves. He said with a fatuous air—

'And will you be annoyed with me if I seem to attach great importance to your telling me that name?'

'Will you be annoyed with me,' answered Madame de Vaudremont, 'if a remnant of affection prevents my telling you; and if I forbid you to make the smallest advances to that young lady? It would be at the risk of your life perhaps.'

'To lose your good graces, Madame, would be worse than to lose my life.'

'Martial,' said the Countess severely, 'she is Madame de Soulanges. Her husband would blow your brains out —if, indeed, you have any——'

'Ha, ha!' laughed the coxcomb. 'What! the Colonel can leave the man in peace who has robbed him

of your love, and then would fight for his wife! What a subversion of principles!—I beg of you to allow me to dance with the little lady. You will then be able to judge how little love that heart of ice could feel for you; for, if the Colonel disapproves of my dancing with his wife after allowing me to——'

'But she loves her husband.'

'A still further obstacle that I shall have the pleasure of conquering.'

'But she is married.'

'A whimsical objection!'

'Ah!' said the Countess, with a bitter smile, 'you punish us alike for our faults and our repentance!'

'Do not be angry!' exclaimed Martial eagerly. 'Oh, forgive me, I beseech you. There, I will think no more of Madame de Soulanges.'

'You deserve that I should send you to her.'

'I am off then,' said the Baron, laughing, 'and I shall return more devoted to you than ever. You will see that the prettiest woman in the world cannot capture the heart that is yours.'

'That is to say, that you want to win Colonel Montcornet's horse?'

'Ah! Traitor!' said he, threatening his friend with his finger. The Colonel smiled and joined them; the Baron gave him the seat near the Countess, saying to her with a sardonic accent—

'Here, Madame, is a man who boasted that he could win your good graces in one evening.'

He went away, thinking himself clever to have piqued the Countess's pride and done Montcornet an ill turn; but, in spite of his habitual keenness, he had not appreciated the irony underlying Madame de Vaudremont's speech, and did not perceive that she had come as far to meet his friend as his friend towards her, though both were unconscious of it.

At the moment when the lawyer went fluttering up

to the candelabrum by which Madame de Soulanges sat, pale, timid, and apparently alive only in her eyes, her husband came to the door of the ballroom, his eyes flashing with anger. The old Duchess, watchful of everything, flew to her nephew, begged him to give her his arm and find her carriage, affecting to be mortally bored, and hoping thus to prevent a vexatious outbreak. Before going she fired a singular glance of intelligence at her niece, indicating the enterprising knight who was about to address her, and this signal seemed to say, 'There he is, avenge yourself!'

Madame de Vaudremont caught these looks of the aunt and niece; a sudden light dawned on her mind; she was frightened lest she was the dupe of this old woman, so cunning and so practised in intrigue.

'That perfidious Duchess,' said she to herself, 'has perhaps been amusing herself by preaching morality to me while playing me some spiteful trick of her own.'

At this thought Madame de Vaudremont's pride was perhaps more roused than her curiosity to disentangle the thread of this intrigue. In the absorption of mind to which she was a prey she was no longer mistress of herself. The Colonel, interpreting to his own advantage the embarrassment evident in the Countess's manner and speech, became more ardent and pressing. The old blasés diplomates, amusing themselves by watching the play of faces, had never found so many intrigues at once to watch or guess at. The passions agitating the two couples were to be seen with variations at every step in the crowded rooms, and reflected with different shades in other countenances. The spectacle of so many vivid passions, of all these lovers' quarrels, these pleasing revenges, these cruel favours, these flaming glances, of all this ardent life diffused around them, only made them feel their impotence more keenly.

At last the Baron had found a seat by Madame de Soulanges. His eyes stole a long look at her neck, as

fresh as dew and as fragrant as field flowers. He admired close at hand the beauty which had amazed him from afar. He could see a small, well-shod foot, and measure with his eye a slender and graceful shape. At that time women wore their sash tied close under the bosom, in imitation of Greek statues, a pitiless fashion for those whose bust was faulty. As he cast furtive glances at the Countess's figure, Martial was enchanted with its perfection.

'You have not danced once this evening, Madame,' said he in soft and flattering tones. 'Not, I should suppose, for lack of a partner?'

'I never go to parties; I am quite unknown,' replied Madame de Soulanges coldly, not having understood the look by which her aunt had just conveyed to her that she was to attract the Baron.

Martial, to give himself countenance, twisted the diamond he wore on his left hand; the rainbow fires of the gem seemed to flash a sudden light on the young Countess's mind; she blushed and looked at the Baron with an undefinable expression.

'Do you like dancing?' asked the Provençal, to reopen the conversation.

'Yes, very much, Monsieur.'

At this strange reply their eyes met. The young man, surprised by the earnest accent, which aroused a vague hope in his heart, had suddenly questioned the lady's eyes.

'Then, Madame, am I not overbold in offering myself to be your partner for the next quadrille?'

Artless confusion coloured the Countess's white cheeks.

'But, Monsieur, I have already refused one partner—a military man——'

'Was it that tall cavalry Colonel whom you see over there?'

'Precisely so,'

'Oh! he is a friend of mine; feel no alarm. Will you grant me the favour I dare hope for?'

'Yes, Monsieur.'

Her tone betrayed an emotion so new and so deep that the lawyer's world-worn soul was touched. He was overcome by shyness like a school-boy's, lost his confidence, and his southern brain caught fire; he tried to talk, but his phrases struck him as graceless in comparison with Madame de Soulanges' bright and subtle replies. It was lucky for him that the quadrille was forming. Standing by his beautiful partner, he felt more at ease. To many men dancing is a phase of being; they think that they can more powerfully influence the heart of woman by displaying the graces of their bodies than by their intellect. Martial wished, no doubt, at this moment to put forth all his most effective seductions, to judge by the pretentiousness of his movements and gestures.

He led his conquest to the quadrille in which the most brilliant women in the room made it a point of chimerical importance to dance in preference to any other. While the orchestra played the introductory bars to the first figure, the Baron felt it an incredible gratification to his pride to perceive, as he reviewed the ladies forming the lines of that formidable square, that Madame de Soulanges' dress might challenge that even of Madame de Vaudremont, who, by a chance not perhaps unsought, was standing with Montcornet *vis-à-vis* to himself and the lady in blue. All eyes were for a moment turned on Madame de Soulanges; a flattering murmur showed that she was the subject of every man's conversation with his partner. Looks of admiration and envy centred on her, with so much eagerness that the young creature, abashed by a triumph she seemed to disclaim, modestly looked down, blushed, and was all the more charming. When she raised her white eyelids it was to look at her ravished partner as though she wished

to transfer the glory of this admiration to him, and to say that she cared more for his than for all the rest. She threw her innocence into her vanity; or rather she seemed to give herself up to the guileless admiration which is the beginning of love, with the good faith found only in youthful hearts. As she danced, the lookers-on might easily believe that she displayed her grace for Martial alone; and though she was modest, and new to the trickery of the ballroom, she knew as well as the most accomplished coquette how to raise her eyes to his at the right moment and drop their lids with assumed modesty.

When the movement of a new figure, invented by a dancer named Trénis, and named after him, brought Martial face to face with the Colonel—'I have won your horse,' said he, laughing.

'Yes, but you have lost eighty thousand francs a year!' retorted Montcornet, glancing at Madame de Vaudremont.

'What do I care?' replied Martial. 'Madame de Soulanges is worth millions!'

At the end of the quadrille more than one whisper was poured into more than one ear. The less pretty women made moral speeches to their partners, commenting on the budding *liaison* between Martial and the Comtesse de Soulanges. The handsomest wondered at her easy surrender. The men could not understand such luck as the Baron's, not regarding him as particularly fascinating. A few indulgent women said it was not fair to judge the Countess too hastily; young wives would be in a very hapless plight if an expressive look or a few graceful dancing steps were enough to compromise a woman.

Martial alone knew the extent of his happiness. During the last figure, when the ladies had to form the *moulinet*, his fingers clasped those of the Countess, and he fancied that, through the thin perfumed kid of her gloves, the young wife's grasp responded to his amorous appeal.

'Madame,' said he, as the quadrille ended, 'do not go back to the odious corner where you have been burying your face and your dress until now. Is admiration the only benefit you can obtain from the jewels that adorn your white neck and beautifully dressed hair? Come and take a turn through the rooms to enjoy the scene and yourself.'

Madame de Soulanges yielded to her seducer, who thought she would be his all the more surely if he could only show her off. Side by side they walked two or three times amid the groups who crowded the rooms. The Comtesse de Soulanges, evidently uneasy, paused for an instant at each door before entering, only doing so after stretching her neck to look at all the men there. This alarm, which crowned the Baron's satisfaction, did not seem to be removed till he said to her, 'Make yourself easy; *he* is not here.'

They thus made their way to an immense picture gallery in a wing of the mansion, where their eyes could feast in anticipation on the splendid display of a collation prepared for three hundred persons. As supper was about to begin, Martial led the Countess to an oval boudoir looking on to the garden, where the rarest flowers and a few shrubs made a scented bower under bright blue hangings. The murmurs of the festivity here died away. The Countess, at first startled, refused firmly to follow the young man; but, glancing in a mirror, she no doubt assured herself that they could be seen, for she seated herself on an ottoman with a fairly good grace.

'This room is charming,' said she, admiring the sky-blue hangings looped with pearls.

'All here is love and delight!' said the Baron, with deep emotion.

In the mysterious light which prevailed he looked at the Countess, and detected on her gently agitated face an expression of uneasiness, modesty, and eagerness which enchanted him. The young lady smiled, and this

smile seemed to put an end to the struggle of feeling surging in her heart; in the most insinuating way she took her adorer's left hand, and drew from his finger the ring on which she had fixed her eyes.

'What a fine diamond!' she exclaimed in the artless tone of a young girl betraying the incitement of a first temptation.

Martial, troubled by the Countess's involuntary but intoxicating touch, like a caress, as she drew off the ring, looked at her with eyes as glittering as the gem.

'Wear it,' he said, 'in memory of this hour, and for the love of——'

She was looking at him with such rapture that he did not end the sentence; he kissed her hand.

'You give it me?' she said, looking much astonished.

'I wish I had the whole world to offer you!'

'You are not joking?' she went on, in a voice husky with too great satisfaction.

'Will you accept only my diamond?'

'You will never take it back?' she insisted.

'Never.'

She put the ring on her finger. Martial, confident of coming happiness, was about to put his hand round her waist, but she suddenly rose, and said in a clear voice, without any agitation—

'I accept the diamond, Monsieur, with the less scruple because it belongs to me.'

The Baron was speechless.

'Monsieur de Soulanges took it lately from my dressing-table, and told me he had lost it.'

'You are mistaken, Madame,' said Martial, nettled. 'It was given me by Madame de Vaudremont.'

'Precisely so,' said she with a smile. 'My husband borrowed this ring of me, he gave it to her, she made it a present to you; my ring has made a little journey, that is all. This ring will perhaps tell me all I do not know, and teach me the secret of always pleasing.—

Monsieur,' she went on, 'if it had not been my own, you may be sure I should not have risked paying so dear for it; for a young woman, it is said, is in danger with you. But, you see,' and she touched a spring within the ring, 'here is M. de Soulanges' hair.'

She fled into the crowded rooms so swiftly, that it seemed useless to try to follow her; besides, Martial, utterly confounded, was in no mood to carry the adventure further. The Countess's laugh found an echo in the boudoir, where the young coxcomb now perceived, between two shrubs, the Colonel and Madame de Vaudremont, both laughing heartily.

'Will you have my horse, to ride after your prize?' said the Colonel.

The Baron took the banter poured upon him by Madame de Vaudremont and Montcornet with a good grace, which secured their silence as to the events of the evening, when his friend exchanged his charger for a rich and pretty young wife.

As the Comtesse de Soulanges drove across Paris from the Chaussée d'Antin to the Faubourg Saint-Germain, where she lived, her soul was a prey to many alarms. Before leaving the Hôtel Gondreville she went through all the rooms, but found neither her aunt nor her husband, who had gone away without her. Frightful suspicions then tortured her ingenuous mind. A silent witness of her husband's torments since the day when Madame de Vaudremont had chained him to her car, she had confidently hoped that repentance would ere long restore her husband to her. It was with unspeakable repugnance that she had consented to the scheme plotted by her aunt, Madame de Lansac, and at this moment she feared she had made a mistake.

The evening's experience had saddened her innocent soul. Alarmed at first by the Count's look of suffering and dejection, she had become more so on seeing her

rival's beauty, and the corruption of society had gripped her heart. As she crossed the Pont Royal she threw away the desecrated hair at the back of the diamond, given to her once as a token of the purest affection. She wept as she remembered the bitter grief to which she had so long been a victim, and shuddered more than once as she reflected that the duty of a woman, who wishes for peace in her home, compels her to bury sufferings so keen as hers at the bottom of her heart, and without a complaint.

'Alas!' thought she, 'what can women do when they do not love? What is the fount of their indulgence? I cannot believe that, as my aunt tells me, reason is all-sufficient to maintain them in such devotion.'

She was still sighing when her man-servant let down the handsome carriage-step down which she flew into the hall of her house. She rushed precipitately upstairs, and when she reached her room was startled by seeing her husband sitting by the fire.

'How long is it, my dear, since you have gone to balls without telling me beforehand?' he asked in a broken voice. 'You must know that a woman is always out of place without her husband. You compromised yourself strangely by remaining in the dark corner where you had ensconced yourself.'

'Oh, my dear, good Léon,' said she in a coaxing tone, 'I could not resist the happiness of seeing you without your seeing me. My aunt took me to this ball, and I was very happy there!'

This speech disarmed the Count's looks of their assumed severity, for he had been blaming himself while dreading his wife's return, no doubt fully informed at the ball of an infidelity he had hoped to hide from her; and, as is the way of lovers conscious of their guilt, he tried, by being the first to find fault, to escape her just anger. Happy in seeing her husband smile, and in finding him at this hour in a room whither of late he

had come more rarely, the Countess looked at him so tenderly that she blushed and cast down her eyes. Her clemency enraptured Soulanges all the more, because this scene followed on the misery he had endured at the ball. He seized his wife's hand and kissed it gratefully. Is not gratitude often a part of love?

'Hortense, what is that on your finger that has hurt my lip so much?' asked he, laughing.

'It is my diamond which you said you had lost, and which I have found.'

General Montcornet did not marry Madame de Vaudremont, in spite of the mutual understanding in which they had lived for a few minutes, for she was one of the victims of the terrible fire which sealed the fame of the ball given by the Austrian ambassador on the occasion of Napoleon's marriage with the daughter of the Emperor Joseph II.

July 1829.

THE IMAGINARY MISTRESS

Dedicated to the Comtesse Clara Maffei.

In the month of September 1835, one of the richest heiresses of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, Mademoiselle du Rouvre, the only child of the Marquis du Rouvre, married Count Adam Mitgislas Laginski, a young Polish exile.

I allow myself to spell the names as they are pronounced, to spare the reader the sight of the fortifications of consonants by which, in the Slav languages, the vowels are protected, no doubt to secure them against loss, seeing how few they are.

The Marquis du Rouvre had dissipated almost the whole of one of the finest fortunes of the nobility, to which he had formerly owed his alliance with a Mademoiselle de Ronquerolles. Hence Clémentine had for her uncle, on her mother's side, the Marquis de Ronquerolles, and for her aunt Madame de Sérizy. On her father's side she possessed another uncle in the eccentric person of the Chevalier du Rouvre, the younger son of the house, an old bachelor who had grown rich by speculations in land and houses.

The Marquis de Ronquerolles was so unhappy as to lose both his children during the visitation of cholera. Madame de Sérizy's only son, a young officer of the highest promise, was killed in Africa at the fight by the Macta. In these days rich families run the risk of ruining their children if they have too many, or of becoming extinct if they have but one or two, a singular

result of the Civil Code not foreseen by Napoleon. Thus, by accident, and in spite of Monsieur du Rouvre's reckless extravagances for Florine, one of the most charming of Paris actresses, Clémentine had become an heiress. The Marquis de Ronquerolles, one of the most accomplished diplomates of the new dynasty, his sister, Madame de Sérizy, and the Chevalier du Rouvre agreed that, to rescue their fortunes from the Marquis's clutches, they would leave them to their niece, to whom they each promised ten thousand francs a year on her marriage.

It is quite unnecessary to say that the Pole, though a refugee, cost the French Government absolutely nothing. Count Adam belonged to one of the oldest and most illustrious families of Poland, connected with most of the princely houses of Germany, with the Sapiéhas, the Radziwills, the Mniszechs, the Rzewuskis, the Czartoryskis, the Leszinskis, the Lubomirskis, in short, all the great Sarmatian *skis*. But a knowledge of heraldry is not a strong point in France under Louis Philippe, and such nobility could be no recommendation to the *bourgeoisie* then in power. Besides, when, in 1833, Adam made his appearance on the Boulevard des Italiens, at Frascati's, at the Jockey Club, he led the life of a man who, having lost his political prospects, falls back on his vices and his love of pleasure. He was taken for a student.

The Polish nationality, as the result of an odious Government reaction, had fallen as low as the Republicans had tried to think it high. The strange struggle of Movement against Resistance—two words which thirty years hence will be inexplicable—made a farce of what ought to have been so worthy: the name, that is, of a vanquished nation to which France gave hospitality, for which entertainments were devised, for which every one danced or sang by subscription; a nation, in short, which at the time when, in 1796, Europe was fighting

France, had offered her six thousand men, and such men!

Do not conclude from this that I mean to represent the Emperor Nicholas as being in the wrong as regards Poland, or Poland as regards the Emperor Nicholas. In the first place, it would be a silly thing enough to slip a political discussion into a tale which ought to interest or to amuse. Besides, Russia and Poland were equally right: one for aiming at unity of Empire, the other for desiring to be free again. It may be said, in passing, that Poland might have conquered Russia by the influence of manners instead of beating her with weapons; thus imitating the Chinese, who at last Chinesified the Tartars, and who, it is to be hoped, will do the same by the English. Poland ought to have *polished* the Russians; Poniatowski had tried it in the least temperate district of the Empire. But that gentleman was a misunderstood king—all the more so because he did not perhaps understand himself.

How was it possible not to hate the poor people who were the cause of the horrible deceit committed on the occasion of the review when all Paris was eager to rescue Poland? People affected to regard the Poles as allies of the Republican party, forgetting that Poland was an aristocratic republic. Thenceforth the party of wealth poured ignoble contempt on the Pole, who had been deified but a few days since. The wind of a riot has always blown the Parisians round from north to south under every form of government. This weathercock temper of Paris opinion must be remembered if we would understand how, in 1835, the name of Pole was a word of ridicule among the race who believe themselves to be the wittiest and politest in the world, and its central luminary, in a city which, at this day, wields the sceptre of art and literature.

There are, alas! two types of Polish refugees—the republican Pole, the son of Lelewel, and the noble Pole,

of the party led by Prince Czartoryski. These two kinds of Pole are as fire and water, but why blame them? Are not such divisions always to be observed among refugees whatever nation they belong to, and no matter what country they go to? They carry their country and their hatreds with them. At Brussels two French émigrés priests expressed the greatest aversion for each other; and when one of them was asked his reasons, he replied, pointing to his companion in misery, 'He is a Jansenist!' Dante, in his exile, would gladly have stabbed any adversary of the *Bianchi*. In this lies the reason of the attacks made on the venerable Prince Adam Czartoryski by the French radicals, and that of the disapproval shown to a section of the Polish emigrants by the Cæsars of the counter and the Alexanders by letters patent.

In 1834 Adam Mitgislas Laginski was the butt of Parisian witticisms.—'He is a nice fellow though he is a Pole,' said Rastignac.—'All the Poles are great lords,' said Maxime de Trailles, 'but this one pays his gambling debts; I begin to think that he must have had an estate.'

And without offence to the exiles, it may be remarked that the levity, the recklessness, the fluidity of the Sarmatian character justified the calumnies of the Parisians, who, indeed, in similar circumstances, would be exactly like the Poles. The French aristocracy, so admirably supported by the Polish aristocracy during the Revolution, certainly made no equivalent return to those who were forced to emigrate in 1832. We must have the melancholy courage to say that, in this, the Faubourg Saint-Germain remains Poland's debtor.

Was Count Adam rich, was he poor, was he an adventurer? The problem long remained unsolved. Diplomatic circles, faithful to their instructions, imitated the silence observed by the Emperor Nicholas, who at that time counted every Polish émigré as dead. The

Tuileries, and most of those who took their cue from thence, gave an odious proof of this characteristic policy dignified by the name of prudence. A Russian prince, with whom they had smoked many cigars at the time of the emigration, was ignored because, as it seemed, he had fallen into disgrace with the Emperor Nicholas.

Thus placed between the prudence of the Court and that of diplomatic circles, Poles of good family lived in the Biblical solitude of *Super flumina Babylonis*, or frequented certain drawing-rooms which served as neutral territory for every variety of opinion. In a city of pleasure like Paris, where amusement is to be had in every rank, Polish recklessness found twice as many pretexts as it needed for leading a dissipated bachelor life. Besides, it must be said, Adam had against him at first both his appearance and his manners.

There are two types of Pole, as there are two types of Englishwoman. When an Englishwoman is not a beauty, she is horribly ugly—and Count Adam belongs to the second category. His face is small, somewhat sour, and looks as if it had been squeezed in a vice. His short nose, fair hair, red moustaches and beard, give him the expression of a goat; all the more so because he is short and thin, and his eyes, tinged with dingy yellow, startle you by the oblique leer which Virgil's line has made famous. How is that, in spite of such unfavourable conditions, he has such exquisite manners and style? The solution of this mystery is given by his dress, that of a finished dandy, and by the education he owes to his mother, a Radziwill. If his courage carries him to the point of rashness, his mind is not above the current and trivial pleasantries of Paris conversation; still, he does not often find a young fellow who is his superior among men of fashion. These young men nowadays talk far too much of horses, income, taxes, and deputies, for French conversation to be what it once was. Wit needs leisure, and certain inequalities of position. Con-

versation is better perhaps at Petersburg and at Vienna than it is in Paris. Equals need no subtleties; they tell each other everything straight out, just as it is. Hence the ironical laughers of Paris could scarcely discern a man of family in a light-hearted student, as he seemed, who in talking passed carelessly from one subject to another, who pursued amusement with all the more frenzy because he had just escaped from great perils, and who, having left the country where his family was known, thought himself at liberty to lead an irresponsible life without risking a loss of consideration.

One fine day in 1834, Adam bought a large house in the Rue de la Pépinière. Six months later it was on as handsome a footing as the richest houses in Paris. Just at the time when Laginski was beginning to be taken seriously, he saw Clémentine at the Italian opera, and fell in love with her. A year later, he married her. Madame d'Espard's circle set the fashion of approval. Mothers of families then learned, too late, that ever since the year 900, the Laginskis had ranked with the most illustrious families of the North. By a stroke of prudence, most unlike a Pole, the young Count's mother had, at the beginning of the rebellion, mortgaged her estates for an immense sum advanced by two Jewish houses, and invested in the French funds. Count Adam Laginski had an income of more than eighty thousand francs. This put an end to the astonishment expressed in some drawing-rooms at the rashness of Madame de Sérizy, of old de Ronquerolles, and of the Chevalier du Rouvre in yielding to their niece's mad passion.

As usual, the world rushed from one extreme to the other. During the winter of 1836, Count Adam became the fashion, and Clémentine Laginska one of the queens of Paris. Madame de Laginska, at the present time, is one of the charming group of young married women among whom shine Mesdames de Lestorade, de Portenduère, Marie de Vandenesse, du Guénic, and de Maufrigneuse,

the very flower of Paris society, who live high above the parvenus, bourgeois, and wire-pullers of recent politics.

This preamble was needful to define the sphere in which was carried through one of those sublime efforts, less rare than the detractors of the present time imagine, —pearls hidden in rough shells, and lost in the depths of that abyss, that ocean, that never-resting tide called the World—the Age—Paris, London, or Petersburg—whichever you will.

If ever the truth that architecture is the expression of the manners of a race was fully demonstrated, is it not since the revolution of 1830, under the reign of the House of Orleans? Great fortunes have shrunk in France, and the majestic mansions of our fathers are constantly being demolished and replaced by a sort of tenement houses, in which a peer of France of July dwells on the third floor, over some newly-enriched empiric. Styles are mingled in confusion. As there is no longer any Court, any nobility to set a 'tone,' no harmony is to be seen in the productions of art. On the other hand, architecture has never found more economical tricks for imitating what is genuine and thorough, never displayed more ingenuity and resource in arrangement. Ask an artist to deal with a strip of the garden of an old 'hôtel' now destroyed, and he will build you a little Louvre crushed under its ornamentation; he will give you a courtyard, stables, and, if you insist, a garden; inside he contrives such a number of little rooms and corridors, and cheats the eye so effectually, that you fancy yourself comfortable; in fact, there are so many bedrooms, that a ducal retinue can live and move in what was only the bake-house of a president of a law court.

The Comtesse Laginska's house is one of these modern structures, with a courtyard in front and a garden behind. To the right of the courtyard are the servants' quarters, balanced on the left by the stables and coach-houses. The porter's lodge stands between two handsome gates.

The chief luxury of this house consists in a delightful conservatory at the end of a boudoir on the ground floor, where all the beautiful reception rooms are. It was a philanthropist driven out of England who built this architectural gem, constructed the conservatory, planned the garden, varnished the doors, paved the out-buildings with brick, filled the windows with green glass, and realised a vision like that—in due proportion—of George IV. at Brighton. The inventive, industrious, and ready Paris artisan had carved his doors and window-frames; his ceilings were imitated from those of the Middle Ages or of Venetian palaces, and there was a lavish outlay of marble slabs in external panelling. Steinbock and François Souchet had carved the cornices of the doors and chimney-shelves; Schinner had painted the ceilings with the brush of a master. The wonders of the stairs—marble as white as a woman's arm—defied those of the Hôtel Rothschild.

In consequence of the disturbances, the price of this folly was not more than eleven hundred thousand francs. For an Englishman this was giving it away. All this splendour, called princely by people who do not know what a real prince is, stood in the garden of a contractor—a Crœsus of the Revolution, who had died at Brussels a bankrupt after a sudden convulsion of the Bourse. The Englishman died at Paris—died of Paris—for to many people Paris is a disease; sometimes it is several diseases. His widow, a Methodist, had a perfect horror of the nabob's little house—this philanthropist had been a dealer in opium. The virtuous widow ordered that the scandalous property should be sold just at the time when the disturbances made peace doubtful on any terms. Count Adam took advantage of the opportunity; and you shall be told how it happened, for nothing could be less consonant with his lordly habits.

Behind this house, built of stone fretted like a melon, spreads the green velvet of an English lawn, shaded at

the further end by an elegant clump of exotic trees, among which rises a Chinese pavilion with its mute bells and pendent gilt eggs. The greenhouse and its fantastic decorations screen the outer wall on the south side. The other wall, opposite the greenhouse, is hung with creepers grown in arcades over poles and cross-beams painted green. This meadow, this realm of flowers, these gravelled paths, this mimic forest, these aerial trellices cover an area of about twenty-five square perches, of which the present value would be four hundred thousand francs, as much as a real forest. In the heart of this silence won from Paris, birds sing; there are blackbirds, nightingales, bullfinches, chaffinches, and numbers of sparrows. The conservatory is a vast flower-bed, where the air is loaded with perfume, and where you may walk in winter as though summer was blazing with all its fires. The means by which an atmosphere is produced at will of the tropics, China or Italy, are ingeniously concealed from view. The pipes in which the boiling water circulates—the steam, hot air, what not—are covered with soil, and look like garlands of growing flowers.

The boudoir is spacious. On a small plot of ground the miracle wrought by the Paris fairy called Architecture is to produce everything on a large scale. The young Countess's boudoir was the pride of the artist to whom Count Adam intrusted the task of redecorating the house. To sin there would be impossible, there are too many pretty trifles. Love would not know where to alight amid work-tables of Chinese carving, where the eye can find thousands of droll little figures wrought in the ivory—the outcome of the toil of two families of Chinese artists; vases of burnt topaz mounted on filigree stands; mosaics that invite to theft; Dutch pictures, such as Schinner now paints again; angels imagined as Steinbock conceives of them (but does not always work them out himself); statuettes executed by geniuses pursued by creditors (the

true interpretation of the Arab myths); sublime first sketches by our greatest artists; fronts of carved chests let into the wainscot, and alternating with the inventions of Indian embroidery; gold-coloured curtains draped over the doors from an architrave of black oak wrought with the swarming figures of a hunting scene; chairs and tables worthy of Madame de Pompadour; a Persian carpet, and so forth. And finally, as a crowning touch, all this splendour, seen under a softened light filtering in through lace curtains, looks all the more beautiful. On a marble slab, among some antiques, a lady's whip, with a handle carved by Mademoiselle de Fauveau, shows that the Countess is fond of riding.

Such is a boudoir in 1837, a display of property to divert the eye, as though ennui threatened to invade the most restless and unresting society in the world. Why is there nothing individual, intimate, nothing to invite reverie and repose?—Why?—Because no one is sure of the morrow, and every one enjoys life as a prodigal spends a life-interest.

One morning Clémentine affected a meditative air, as she lounged on one of those deep siesta chairs from which we cannot bear to rise, so cleverly has the upholsterer who invented them contrived to fit them to the curves of laziness and the comfort of the *Dolce far niente*. The doors to the conservatory were open, admitting the scent of vegetation and the perfumes of the tropics. The young wife watched Adam, who was smoking an elegant narghileh, the only form of pipe she allowed in this room. Over the other door, curtains, caught back by handsome ropes, showed two magnificent rooms beyond: one in white and gold, resembling that of the Hôtel Forbin-Janson, the other in the taste of the Renaissance. The dining-room, unrivalled in Paris by any but that of the Baron de Nucingen, is at the end of a corridor, with a ceiling and walls decorated in a mediæval style. This corridor is reached, on the courtyard front, through

a large ante-room, through whose glass door the splendour of the stairs is seen.

The Count and Countess had just breakfasted; the sky was a sheet of blue without a cloud; the month of April was drawing to a close. The household had already known two years of happiness, and now, only two days since, Clémentine had discovered in her home something resembling a secret, a mystery. A Pole, let it be repeated to his honour, is generally weak in the presence of a woman; he is so full of tenderness that, in Poland, he becomes her inferior; and though Polish women are admirable creatures, a Pole is even more quickly routed by a Parisienne. Hence, Count Adam, pressed hard with questions, had not enough artless cunning to sell his secret dear to his wife. With a woman there is always something to be got for a secret; and she likes you the better for it, as a rogue respects an honest man whom he has failed to take in. The Count, more ready with his sword than with his tongue, only stipulated that he should not be required to answer till he had finished his narghileh full of *tombaki*.

'When we were travelling,' said she, 'you replied to every difficulty by saying, "Paz will see to that!" You never wrote to anybody but Paz. On my return, every one refers me to *the Captain*. I want to go out. —The Captain! Is there a bill to be paid?—The Captain. If my horse's pace is rough, they will speak to Captain Paz. In short, here I feel as if it were a game of dominoes; everywhere Paz! I hear no one talked of but Paz, but I can never see Paz. What is Paz? Let our Paz be brought to see me.'

'Then is not everything as it ought to be?' said the Count, relinquishing the mouthpiece of his narghileh.

'Everything is so quite what it ought to be, that if we had two hundred thousand francs a year, we should be ruined by living in the way we do with a hundred and ten thousand,' said she. She pulled the bell-handle

embroidered in tent-stitch, a marvel of skill. A man-servant dressed like a Minister at once appeared.

'Tell Monsieur le Capitaine Paz that I wish to speak to him,' said she.

'If you fancy you will find anything out in that way——,' said Count Adam with a smile.

It may be useful to say that Adam and Clémentine, married in December 1835, after spending the winter in Paris, had during 1836 travelled in Italy, Switzerland, and Germany. They returned home in November, and during the winter just past the Countess had for the first time received her friends, and then had discovered the existence—the almost speechless and unacknowledged, but most useful presence—of a factotum whose person seemed to be invisible—this Captain Paz or Paç.

'Monsieur le Capitaine Paz begs Madame la Comtesse to excuse him; he is round at the stables, and in a dress which does not allow of his coming at this minute. But as soon as he is dressed Count Paz will come,' said the man-servant.

'Why, what was he doing?'

'He was showing Constantine how to groom the Countess's horse; the man did not do it to his mind,' replied the servant.

The Countess looked at the man; he was quite serious, and took good care not to imply by a smile the comment which inferiors so often allow themselves on a superior who seems to have descended to their level.

'Ah, he was brushing down Cora?'

'You are not riding out this morning, Madame?' said the servant; but he got no answer, and went.

'Is he a Pole?' asked Clémentine of her husband, who bowed affirmatively.

Clémentine lay silent, examining Adam. Her feet, almost at full length on a cushion, her head in the attitude of a bird listening on the edge of its nest to the sounds of the grove, she would have seemed charming

to the most blasé of men. Fair and slight, her hair curled *à l'Anglaise*, she looked like one of the almost fabulous figures in *Keepsakes*, especially as she was wrapped in a morning gown of Persian silk, of which the thick folds did not so effectually disguise the graces of her figure and the slenderness of her waist, as that they could not be admired through the thick covering of flowers and embroidery. As she crossed the brightly coloured stuff over her chest, the hollow of her throat remained visible, the white skin contrasting in tone with the handsome lace trimming over the shoulders. Her eyes, fringed with black lashes, emphasised the expression of curiosity that puckered a pretty mouth. On her well-formed brow were traced the characteristic curves of the Paris woman, wilful, light-hearted, well educated, but invulnerable to vulgar temptations. Her hands, almost transparent, hung from each arm of her deep chair; the taper fingers, curved at the tips, showed nails like pink almonds that caught the light.

Adam smiled at his wife's impatience, gazing at her with a look which conjugal satiety had not yet made lukewarm. This slim little Countess had known how to be mistress in her own house, for she scarcely acknowledged Adam's admiration. In the glances she stole at him there was perhaps a dawning consciousness of the superiority of a Parisienne to this spruce, lean, and red-haired Pole.

'Here comes Paz,' said the Count, hearing a step that rang in the corridor.

The Countess saw a tall, handsome man come in, well built, bearing in his features the marks of the grief which comes of strength and misfortune. Paz had dressed hastily in one of those tightly fitting coats, fastened by braid straps and oval buttons, which used to be called *polonaises*. Thick, black hair, but ill-kempt, covered his squarely-shaped head, and Clémentine could see his broad forehead as shiny as a piece of marble,

for he held his peaked cap in his hand. That hand was like the hand of the Hercules carrying the infant Mercury. Robust health bloomed in a face equally divided by a large Roman nose, which reminded Clémentine of the handsome Trasteverini. A black silk stock put a finishing touch of martial appearance to this mystery of near six feet high, with jet-black eyes as lustrous as an Italian's. The width of his full trousers, hiding all but the toes of his boots, showed that Paz still was faithful to the fashions of Poland. Certainly, to a romantic woman, there must have been something burlesque in the violent contrast observable between the Captain and the Count, between the little Pole with his narrow frame and this fine soldier, between the carpet-knight and the knight servitor.

'Good morning, Adam,' he said to the Count with familiarity.

Then he bowed gracefully, asking Clémentine in what way he could serve her.

'Then you are Laginski's friend?' asked the lady.

'For life and death,' replied Paz, on whom the young Count shed his most affectionate smile, as he exhaled his last fragrant puff of smoke.

'Well, then, why do you not eat with us? Why did you not accompany us to Italy and to Switzerland? Why do you hide yourself so as to avoid the thanks I owe you for the constant services you do us?' said the young Countess, with a sort of irritation, but without the slightest feeling.

In fact, she detected a kind of volunteer slavery on the part of Paz. At that time such an idea was inseparable from a certain disdain for a socially amphibious creature, a being at once secretary and bailiff, neither wholly bailiff nor wholly secretary, some poor relation—inconvenient as a friend.

'The fact is, Countess,' he replied with some freedom, 'that no thanks are owing to me. I am Adam's friend,

and I find my pleasure in taking charge of his interests.'

'And is it for your pleasure too that you remain standing?' said Count Adam.

Paz sat down in an armchair near the doorway.

'I remember having seen you on the occasion of our marriage, and sometimes in the courtyard,' said the lady; 'but why do you, a friend of Adam's, place yourself in a position of inferiority?'

'The opinion of the Paris world is to me a matter of indifference,' said he. 'I live for myself, or, if you choose, for you two.'

'But the opinion of the world as regards my husband's friend cannot be a matter of indifference to me——'

'Oh, Madame, the world is easily satisfied by one word: Eccentric—say that.'

After a short pause he asked, 'Do you propose going out?'

'Will you come to the Bois?' said the Countess.

'With pleasure,' and so saying Paz bowed and went out.

'What a good soul! He is as simple as a child,' said Adam.

'Tell me now how you became friends,' said Clémentine.

'Paz, my dearest, is of a family as old, as noble, and as illustrious as our own. At the time of the fall of the Pazzi a member of that family escaped from Florence into Poland, where he settled with some little fortune, and founded the family of the Paz, on which the title of Count was conferred.

'This family, having distinguished itself in the days of our royal republic, grew rich. The cutting from the tree felled in Italy grew with such vigour that there are several branches of the house of the Counts Paz. It will not, therefore, surprise you to be told that there are rich and poor members of the family. Our Paz is the

son of a poor branch. As an orphan, with no fortune but his sword, he served under the Grand Duke Constantine at the time of our Revolution. Carried away by the Polish party, he fought like a Pole, like a patriot, like a man who has nothing—three reasons for fighting well. In the last skirmish, believing his men were following him, he rushed on a Russian battery, and was taken prisoner. I was there. This feat of courage roused my blood. "Let us go and fetch him!" cried I to my horsemen. We charged the battery like freebooters, and I rescued Paz, I being the seventh. We were twenty when we set out, and eight when we came back, including Paz.

'When Warsaw was betrayed we had to think of escaping from the Russians. By a singular chance Paz and I found ourselves together at the same hour and in the same place on the other side of the Vistula. I saw the poor Captain arrested by some Prussians, who at that time had made themselves blood-hounds for the Russians. When one has fished a man out of the Styx, one gets attached to him. This new danger threatening Paz distressed me so much that I allowed myself to be taken with him, intending to be of service to him. Two men can sometimes escape when one alone is lost. Thanks to my name and some family connection with those on whom our fate depended—for we were then in the power of the Prussians—my flight was winked at. I got my dear Captain through as a common soldier and a servant of my house, and we succeeded in reaching Dantzic. We stowed ourselves in a Dutch vessel sailing for England, where we landed two months later.

'My mother had fallen ill in England, and awaited me there; Paz and I nursed her till her death, which was accelerated by the disasters to our cause.

'We then left England, and I brought Paz to France; in such adversities two men become brothers. When I found myself in Paris with sixty-odd thousand francs a

year, not to mention the remains of a sum derived from the sale of my mother's diamonds and the family pictures, I wished to secure a living to Paz before giving myself up to the dissipations of Paris life. I had discerned some sadness in the captain's eyes, sometimes even a suppressed tear floated there. I had had opportunities of appreciating his soul, which is thoroughly noble, lofty, and generous. Perhaps it was painful to him to find himself bound by benefits to a man six years younger than himself without being able to repay him. I, careless and light-hearted as a boy, might ruin myself at play, or let myself be ensnared by some woman; Paz and I might some day be sundered. Though I promised myself that I would always provide for all his needs, I foresaw many chances of forgetting, or being unable to pay Paz an allowance. In short, my angel, I wished to spare him the discomfort, the humiliation, the shame of having to ask me for money, or of seeking in vain for his comrade in some day of necessity. *Dunque*, one morning after breakfast, with our feet on the fire-dogs, each smoking his pipe, after many blushes, and with many precautions, till I saw he was looking at me quite anxiously, I held out to him a bond to bearer producing two thousand four hundred francs interest yearly——'

'Clementine rose, seated herself on Adam's knees, and putting her arm round his neck, kissed him on the brow, saying—

'Dear heart, how noble I think you! And what did Paz say?'

'Thaddeus?' said the Count; 'he turned pale and said nothing.'

'Thaddeus—is that his name?'

'Yes.—Thaddeus folded up the paper and returned it to me, saying, "I thought, Adam, that we were as one in life and death, and that we should never part; do you wish to see no more of me?"—"Oh," said I, "is that the way you take it? Well, then, say no more about it.

If I am ruined, you will be ruined."—Said he, "You are not rich enough to live as a Laginski should; and do you not need a friend to take care of your concerns, who will be father and brother to you, and a trusted confidant?" My dear girl, Paz, as he uttered the words, spoke with a calmness of tone and look which covered a motherly feeling, but which betrayed the gratitude of an Arab, the devotion of a dog, and the friendship of a savage, always ready and always unassuming. On my honour! I took him in our Polish fashion, laying my hand on his shoulder, and I kissed him on the lips. "For life and death, then," said I. "All I have is yours, do just as you will."

'It was he who found me this house for almost nothing. He sold my shares when they were high, and bought when they were low, and we purchased this hovel out of the difference. He is a connoisseur in horses, and deals in them so well that my stable has cost me very little, and yet I have the finest beasts and the prettiest turn-out in Paris. Our servants, old Polish soldiers whom he found, would pass through the fire for us. While I seem to be ruining myself, Paz keeps my house with such perfect order and economy that he has even made good some losses at play, the follies of a young man. My Thaddeus is as cunning as two Genoese, as keen for profit as a Polish Jew, as cautious as a good housekeeper. I have never been able to persuade him to live as I did when I was a bachelor. Sometimes it has needed the gentle violence of friendship to induce him to come to the play when I was going alone, or to one of the dinners I was giving at an eating-house to a party of congenial companions. He does not like the life of drawing-rooms.'

'Then what does he like?' asked Clémentine.

'He loves Poland, and weeps over her. His only extravagance has been money sent, more in my name than in his own, to some of our poor exiles.'

'Dear, how fond I shall be of that good fellow,' said the Countess. 'He seems to me as simple as everything that is truly great.'

'All the pretty things you see here,' said Adam, praising his friend with the most generous security, 'have been found by Paz; he has bought them at sales, or by some chance. Oh! he is keener at a bargain than a trader. If you see him rubbing his hands in the courtyard, it is because he has exchanged a good horse for a better. He lives in me; his delight is to see me well dressed in a dazzlingly smart carriage. He performs all the duties he imposes on himself without fuss or display. One night I had lost twenty thousand francs at whist. "What will Paz say?" thought I to myself as I reached home. Paz gave me the sum, not without a sigh; but he did not blame me even by a look. This sigh checked me more than all the remonstrances of uncles, wives, or mothers in similar circumstances. "You regret the money?" I asked him.—"Oh, not for you, nor for myself; no, I was only thinking that twenty poor relations of mine could have lived on it for a year."

'The family of Paz, you understand, is quite equal to that of Laginski, and I have never regarded my dear Paz as an inferior. I have tried to be as magnanimous in my degree as he in his. I never go out or come in without going to Paz, as if he were my father. My fortune is his. In short, Thaddeus knows that at this day I would rush into danger to rescue him, as I have done twice before.'

'That is not a small thing to say, my dear,' remarked the Countess. 'Devotion is a lightning-flash. Men devote themselves in war, but they no longer devote themselves in Paris.'

'Well, then,' said Adam, 'for Paz I am always in war. Our two natures have preserved their asperities and their faults, but the mutual intimacy of our souls has tightened the bonds, already so close, of our friendship. A man

may save his comrade's life, and kill him afterwards if he finds him a bad companion; but we have gone through what makes friendship indissoluble. There is between us that constant exchange of pleasing impressions on both sides which makes friendship, from that point of view, a richer joy, perhaps, than love.'

A pretty little hand shut the Count's mouth so suddenly that the movement was almost a blow.

'Yes, indeed, my darling,' said he. 'Friendship knows nothing of the bankruptcy of sentiment, the insolvency of pleasures. Love, after giving more than it has, ends by giving less than it receives?'

'On both sides alike then,' said Clémentine, smiling.

'Yes,' said Adam. 'While friendship can but increase. You need not pout. We, my angel, are as much friends as lovers; we, at least, I hope, have combined the two feelings in our happy marriage.'

'I will explain to you what has made you two such good friends,' said Clémentine. 'The difference in your lives arises from a difference in your tastes, and not from compulsory choice; from preference, and not from the necessity of position. So far as a man can be judged from a glimpse, and from what you tell me, in this instance the subaltern may at times be the superior.'

'Oh! Paz is really my superior,' replied Adam simply. 'I have no advantage over him but that of luck.'

His wife kissed him for this generous avowal.

'The perfect skill with which he conceals the loftiness of his soul is an immense superiority,' the Count went on. 'I say to him, "You are a sly fellow; you have vast domains in your mind to which you retire." He has a right to the title of Count Paz; in Paris he will only be called Captain.'

'In short, a Florentine of the Middle Ages has resuscitated after three centuries,' said the Countess. There is something of Dante in him, and something of Michael Angelo.'

'Indeed, you are right; he is at heart a poet,' replied Adam.

'And so I am married to two Poles,' said the young Countess, with a gesture resembling that of a genius on the stage.

'Darling child!' said Adam, clasping Clémentine to him, 'you would have distressed me very much if you had not liked my friend. We were both afraid of that, though he was delighted at my marrying. You will make him very happy by telling him that you love him—oh! as an old friend.'

'Then I will go to dress; it is fine, we will all three go out,' said Clémentine, ringing for her maid.

Paz led such an underground life that all the fashion of Paris wondered who it was that accompanied Clémentine Laginska when they saw her driving to the Bois and back between him and her husband. During the drive Clémentine had insisted that Thaddeus was to dine with her. This whim of a despotic sovereign compelled the Captain to make an unwonted toilet. On returning from her drive Clémentine dressed with some coquettish care, in such a way as to produce an effect even on Adam as she entered the room where the two friends were awaiting her.

'Count Paz,' said she, 'we will go to the opera together.'

It was said in the tone which from a woman conveys, 'If you refuse, we shall quarrel.'

'With pleasure, Madame,' replied the Captain. 'But as I have not a Count's fortune, call me Captain.'

Well, then, Captain, give me your arm,' said she, taking it and leading him into the dining-room with a suggestion of the caressing familiarity which enraptures a lover.

The Countess placed the Captain next her, and he sat like a poor sub-lieutenant dining with a wealthy general. Paz left it to Clémentine to talk, listening to her with all the air of deference to a superior, contra-

dicting her in nothing, and waiting for a positive question before making any reply. In short, to the Countess he seemed almost stupid, and her graces all fell flat before this icy gravity and diplomatic dignity. In vain did Adam try to rouse him by saying, 'Come, cheer up, Captain. It might be supposed that you were not at home. You must have laid a bet that you would disconcert Clémentine?' Thaddeus remained heavy and half-asleep.

When the three were alone at dessert the Captain explained that his life was planned diametrically unlike that of other people; he went to bed at eight o'clock, and rose at daybreak; and he thus excused himself, saying he was very sleepy.

'My intention in taking you to the opera was only to amuse you, Captain; but do just as you please,' said Clémentine, a little nettled.

'I will go,' said Paz.

'Duprez is singing in *William Tell*,' said Adam. 'Would you prefer the *Variétés*?'

The Captain smiled and rang the bell; the man-servant appeared. 'Tell Constantine,' said Paz, 'to take out the large carriage instead of the coupé.—We cannot sit comfortably in it,' he added, turning to the Count.

'A Frenchman would not have thought of that,' said Clémentine, smiling.

'Ah, but we are Florentines transplanted to the North,' replied Thaddeus, with a meaning and an expression which showed that his dulness at dinner had been assumed.

But by a very conceivable want of judgment, there was too great a contrast between the involuntary self-betrayal of this speech and the Captain's attitude during dinner. Clémentine examined him with one of those keen flashes by which a woman reveals at once her surprise and her observancy. Thus, during the few minutes while they were taking their coffee in the drawing-room,

silence reigned—an uncomfortable silence for Adam, who could not divine its cause. Clémentine no longer disturbed Thaddeus. The Captain, for his part, retired again into military rigidity, and came out of it no more, either on the way, or in the box, where he affected to be asleep.

'You see, Madame, that I am very dull company,' said he, during the ballet in the last act of *William Tell.* 'Was I not right to "stick to my last," as the proverb says?'

'On my word, my dear Captain, you are neither a coxcomb nor a chatterbox; you are perhaps a Pole.'

'Leave me then to watch over your pleasures,' he replied, 'to take care of your fortune and your house; that is all I am good for.'

'Tartufe! begone!' cried Adam, smiling. 'My dear, he is full of heart, well informed—he could, if he chose, hold his own in any drawing-room. Clémentine, do not believe what his modesty tells you.'

'Good-night, Countess. I have proved my willingness, and now will avail myself of your carriage to go to bed at once. I will send it back for you.'

Clémentine bowed slightly, and let him go without replying.

'What a bear!' said she to the Count. 'You are much, much nicer.'

Adam pressed his wife's hand unseen.

'Poor, dear Thaddeus, he has endeavoured to be a foil when many men would have tried to seem more attractive than I.'

'Oh!' said she, 'I am not sure that was not intentional; his behaviour would have mystified an ordinary woman.'

Half an hour later, while Boleslas the groom was calling 'Gate,' and the coachman, having turned the carriage to drive in, was waiting for the gates to be opened, Clémentine said to the Count—

'Where does the Captain roost?'

'Up there,' said Adam, pointing to an elegantly constructed attic extending on both sides of the gateway with a window looking on to the street. 'His rooms are over the coach-houses.'

'And who lives in the other half?'

'No one as yet,' replied Adam. 'The other little suite, over the stables, will do for our children and their tutor.'

'He is not in bed,' said the Countess, seeing a light in the Captain's room when the carriage was under the pillared portico—copied from that at the Tuileries, and taking the place of the ordinary zinc awning painted to imitate striped ticking.

Paz, in his dressing-gown, and pipe in hand, was watching Clémentine as she disappeared into the hall. The day had been a cruel one to him. And this is the reason: Thaddeus had felt a fearful shock to his heart on the day when, Adam having taken him to the opera to pronounce his opinion, he first saw Mademoiselle du Rouvre; and again, when he saw her in the Maire's office and at Saint-Thomas d'Aquin, and recognised in her the woman whom a man must love to the exclusion of all others—for Don Juan himself preferred one among the *mille e tre*!

Hence Paz had strongly advocated the classical bridal tour after the wedding. Fairly easy all the time while Clémentine was absent, his tortures began again on the return of the happy couple. And this was what he was thinking as he inhaled his latakia from a cherry-stem pipe, six feet long, a gift from Adam: 'Only I and God, who will reward me for suffering in silence, may ever know how I love her! But how can I maagne to avoid alike her love or her hatred?'

And he sat thinking, thinking, over this problem of the strategy of love.

It must not be supposed that Thaddeus lived bereft of

all joy in the midst of his pain. The triumphant cunning of this day was a source of secret satisfaction. Since the Count's return with his wife, day by day he felt ineffable happiness in seeing that he was necessary to the couple, who, but for him, would have rushed inevitably into ruin. What fortune can hold out against the extravagance of Paris life? Clémentine, brought up by a reckless father, knew nothing of household management, which nowadays the richest women and the highest in rank are obliged to undertake themselves. Who in these days can afford to keep a steward? Adam, on his part, as the son of one of the great Polish nobles who allowed themselves to be devoured by the Jews, and who was incapable of husbanding the remains of one of the most enormous fortunes in Poland—where fortunes were enormous—was not of a temper to restrict either his own fancies or his wife's. If he had been alone, he would probably have ruined himself before his marriage. Paz had kept him from gambling on the Bourse, and does not that say all?

Consequently, when he found that, in spite of himself, he was in love with Clémentine, Paz had not the choice of leaving the house and travelling to forget his passion. Gratitude, the clue to the mystery of his life, held him to the house where he alone could act as man of business to this heedless couple. Their long absence made him hope for a calmer spirit; but the Countess came back more than ever lovely, having acquired that freedom of thought which marriage confers on the Paris woman, and displaying all the charms of a young wife, with the indefinable something which comes of happiness, or of the independence allowed her by a man as trusting, as chivalrous, and as much in love as Adam was.

The consciousness of being the working hub of this magnificent house, the sight of Clémentine stepping out of her carrriage on her return from a party, or setting out in the morning for the Bois de Boulogne, a glimpse

of her on the Boulevards in her pretty carriage, like a flower in its nest of leaves, filled poor Thaddeus with deep, mysterious ecstasies which blossomed at the bottom of his heart without the slightest trace appearing in his features. How, during these five months, should the Countess ever have seen the Captain? He hid from her, concealing the care he took to keep out of her way.

Nothing is so near divine love as a hopeless love. Must not a man have some depth of soul thus to devote himself in silence and obscurity? This depth, where lurks the pride of a father—or of God—enshrines the worship of love for love's sake, as power for power's sake was the watchword of the Jesuits; a sublime kind of avarice, since it is perennially generous, and modelled indeed on the mysterious Being of the first principles of the world. Is not their result Nature? And Nature is an enchantress; she belongs to man, to the poet, the painter, the lover; but is not the Cause superior to Nature in the sight of certain privileged souls, and some stupendous thinkers? The Cause is God. In that sphere of Causes dwelt the spirits of Newton, of Laplace, of Kepler, of Descartes, Malebranche, Spinoza, Buffon, of the true poets and saints of the second century of our era, of Saint Theresa of Spain and the sublime mystics. Every human emotion contains some analogy with the frame of mind in which the Effect is neglected in favour of the Cause, and Thaddeus has risen to the height whence all things look different. Abandoned to the unspeakable joys of creative energy, Thaddeus was, in love, what we recognise as greatest in the records of genius.

'No, she is not altogether deceived,' thought he, as he watched the smoke curl from his pipe. 'She might involve me in an irremediable quarrel with Adam if she spited me; and if she should flirt to torment me, what would become of me?'

The fatuity of this hypothesis was so unlike the

Captain's modest nature, and his somewhat German shyness, that he was vexed with himself for its having occurred to him, and went to bed determined to await events before taking any decisive steps.

Next morning Clémentine breakfasted very well without Thaddeus, and made no remark on his disobedience. That day, as it happened, was her day for being 'at home,' and this, with her, demanded a royal display. She did not observe the absence of Captain Paz, on whom devolved all the arrangements for these great occasions.

'Well and good!' said Paz to himself, as he heard the carriages rumble out at two in the morning; 'the Countess was only prompted by a Parisian's whim or curiosity.'

So the Captain fell back into his regular routine, disturbed for a day by this incident. Clémentine, diverted by the details of life in Paris, seemed to have forgotten Paz. For do you suppose that it is a mere trifle to reign over this inconstant city? Do you imagine, by any chance, that a woman risks nothing but her fortune at that absorbing game?

The winter is to a woman of fashion what, of yore, a campaign was to the soldiers of the Empire. What a work of art—of genius—is a costume or a head-dress created to make a sensation! A fragile, delicate woman wears her hard and dazzling armour of flowers and diamonds, silk and steel, from nine in the evening till two or often three in the morning. She eats little, to attract the eye by her slender shape; she cheats the hunger that attacks her during the evening with debilitating cups of tea, sweet cakes, heating ices, or heavy slices of pastry. The stomach must submit to the commands of vanity. She awakes late, and thus everything is in contradiction to the laws of Nature, and Nature is ruthless.

No sooner is she up than the woman of fashion begins

to dress for the morning, planning her dress for the afternoon. Must she not receive and pay visits, and go to the Bois on horseback or in her carriage? Must she not always be practising the drill of smiles, and fatigue her brain in inventing compliments which shall seem neither stale nor studied? And it is not every woman who succeeds. And then you are surprised, when you see a young woman, whom the world has welcomed in her freshness, faded and blighted at the end of three years. Six months spent in the country are barely enough to heal the wounds inflicted by the winter. We hear nothing talked of but dyspepsia and strange maladies, unknown to women who devote themselves to their household. Formerly a woman was sometimes seen; now she is perpetually on the stage.

Clémentine had to fight her way; she was beginning to be quoted, and amid the cares of this struggle between her and her rivals there was hardly a place for love of her husband! Thaddeus might well be forgotten. However, a month later, in May, a few days before her departure to stay at Ronquerolles in Burgundy, as she was returning from her drive she saw Thaddeus in a side alley of the Champs-Elysées,—Thaddeus, carefully dressed, and in raptures at seeing his Countess so beautiful in her phaeton, with champing horses, splendid liveries; in short, the dear people he admired so much.

'There is the Captain,' said she to Adam.

'Happy fellow!' said the Count. 'These are his great treats! There is not a smarter turn-out than ours, and he delights in seeing everybody envying us our happiness. You have never noticed him before, but he is there almost every day.'

'What can he be thinking of?' said Clémentine.

'He is thinking at this moment that the winter has cost a great deal, and that we shall save a little by staying with your old uncle Ronquerolles,' said Adam.

The Countess had the carriage stopped in front of

Paz, and desired him to take the seat by her side in the carriage. Thaddeus turned as red as a cherry.

'I shall poison you,' he said; 'I have just been smoking cigars.'

'And does not Adam poison me?' she replied quickly.

'Yes, but he is Adam,' replied the Captain.

'And why should not Thaddeus enjoy the same privilege?' said the Countess with a smile.

This heavenly smile had a power which was too much for his heroic resolutions; he gazed at Clémentine with all the fire of his soul in his eyes, but tempered by the angelic expression of his gratitude—that of a man who lived solely by gratitude. The Countess folded her arms in her shawl, leaned back pensively against the cushions, crumpling the feathers of her handsome bonnet, and gazed out at the passers-by. This flash from a soul so noble, and hitherto so resigned, appealed to her feelings. What, after all, was Adam's great merit? Was it not natural that he should be brave and generous? But the Captain!—Thaddeus possessed, or seemed to possess, an immense superiority over Adam. What sinister thoughts distressed the Countess when she once more observed the contrast between the fine, complete physical nature which distinguished Thaddeus and the frail constitution which, in her husband, betrayed the inevitable degeneration of aristocratic families which are so mad as to persist in intermarrying! But the Devil alone knew these thoughts, for the young wife sat with vague meditation in her eyes, saying nothing till they reached home.

'You must dine with us, or I shall be angry with you for having disobeyed me,' said she as she went in. 'You are Thaddeus to me, as you are to Adam. I know the obligations you feel to him, but I also know all we owe to you. In return for two impulses of generosity which are so natural, you are generous at all hours and day

after day.—My father is coming to dine with us, as well as my uncle Ronquerolles and my aunt de Sérizy ; dress at once,' she said, pressing the hand he offered to help her out of the carriage.

Thaddeus went to his room to dress, his heart at once rejoicing and oppressed by an agonising flutter. He came down at the last moment, and all through dinner played his part of a soldier fit for nothing but to fulfil the duties of a steward. But this time Clémentine was not his dupe. His look had enlightened her. Ronquerolles, the cleverest of ambassadors next to Talleyrand, and who served de Marsay so well during his short ministry, was informed by his niece of the high merits of Count Paz, who had so modestly made himself his friend's steward.

'And how is it that this is the first time I have ever seen Count Paz ?' asked the Marquis de Ronquerolles.

'Eh ! he is very sly and underhand,' replied Clémentine, with a look at Paz to desire him to change his demeanour.

Alas ! it must be owned, at the risk of making the Captain less interesting to the reader, Paz, though superior to his friend Adam, was not a man of strong temper. He owed his apparent superiority to his misfortunes. In his days of poverty and isolation at Warsaw he had read and educated himself, had compared and thought much ; but the creative power which makes a great man he did not possess—can it ever be acquired ? Paz was great only through his feelings, and there could rise to the sublime ; but in the sphere of sentiment, being a man of action rather than of ideas, he kept his thoughts to himself. His thoughts, then, did nothing but eat his heart out.

And what, after all, is an unuttered thought ?

At Clémentine's speech the Marquis de Ronquerolles and his sister exchanged glances, with a side look at their niece, Count Adam, and Paz. It was one of those

swift dramas which are played only in Italy or in Paris. Only in these two parts of the world—excepting at all courts—can the eyes say as much. To infuse into the eye all the power of the soul, to give it the full value of speech and throw a poem or a drama into a single flash, excessive servitude or excessive liberty is needed.

Adam, the Marquis du Rouvre, and the Countess did not perceive this flash of observation between a past coquette and an old diplomatist; but Paz, like a faithful dog, understood its forecast. It was, you must remember, an affair of two seconds. To describe the hurricane that ravaged the Captain's heart would be too elaborate for these days.

'What! the uncle and aunt already fancy that she perhaps loves me?' said he to himself. 'My happiness then depends only on my own audacity.—And Adam! . . .'

Ideal love and mere desire, both quite as potent as friendship and gratitude, rent his soul, and for a moment love had the upper hand. This poor heroic lover longed to have his day! Paz became witty; he intended to please, and in answer to some question from Monsieur de Ronquerolles he sketched in grand outlines the Polish rebellion. Thus, at dessert, Paz saw Clémentine hanging on his lips, regarding him as a hero, and forgetting that Adam, after sacrificing a third of his immense fortune, had taken the risks of exile. At nine o'clock, having taken coffee, Madame de Sérizy kissed her niece on the forehead and took leave, carrying off Count Adam with an assertion of authority, and leaving the Marquis du Rouvre and M. de Ronquerolles, who withdrew ten minutes later. Paz and Clémentine were left together.

'I will bid you good-night, Madame,' said Thaddeus; 'you will join them at the opera.'

'No,' replied she. 'I do not care for dancing, and they are giving an odious ballet this evening, *The Revolt of the Seraglio*.'

There was a moment's silence.

'Two years ago Adam would not have gone without me,' she went on, without looking at Paz.

'He loves you to distraction——' Thaddeus began.

'Oh! it is because he loves me to distraction that by to-morrow he will perhaps have ceased to love me!' exclaimed the Countess.

'The women of Paris are inexplicable,' said Thaddeus. 'When they are loved to distraction, they want to be loved rationally; when they are loved rationally, they accuse a man of not knowing how to love.'

'And they are always right, Thaddeus,' she replied with a smile. 'I know Adam well; I owe him no grudge for it; he is fickle, and, above all, a great gentleman; he will always be pleased to have me for his wife, and will never thwart me in any of my tastes; but——'

'What marriage was ever without a but?' said Thaddeus gently, trying to give the Countess's thoughts another direction.

The least conceited man would perhaps have had the thought which nearly drove this lover mad: 'If I do not tell her that I love her,' said he to himself, 'I am an idiot!'

There was silence between these two, one of those terrible pauses which seem bursting with thoughts. The Countess fixed a covert gaze on Paz, and Paz watched her in a mirror. Sitting back in his armchair, like a man given up to digestion, in the attitude of an old man or an indifferent husband, the Captain clasped his hands over his stomach, and mechanically twirled his thumbs, looking stupidly at their rapid movement.

'But say something good about Adam!' exclaimed Clémentine. 'Tell me that he is not fickle, you who know him so well.'

The appeal was sublime.

'This is the opportunity for raising an insurmountable

barrier between us,' thought the unhappy Paz, devising a heroic lie.—'Something good?' he said aloud. 'I love him too well, you would not believe me. I am incapable of telling you any evil of him. . . . And so . . . Madame, I have a hard part to play between you two.'

Clémentine looked down, fixing her eyes on his patent leather shoes.

'You northerners have mere physical courage, you have no constancy in your decisions,' said she in a low tone.

'What are you going to do alone, Madame?' replied Paz, with a perfectly ingenuous expression.

'You are not going to keep me company?'

'Forgive me for leaving you.'

'Why! where are you going?'

'I am going to the circus; it is the first night, in the Champs Élysées, and I must not fail to be there . . .'

'Why not?' asked Clémentine, with a half-angry flash.

'Must I lay bare my heart?' he replied, colouring, 'and confide to you what I conceal from my dear Adam, who believes that I love Poland alone?'

'What! our dear, noble Captain has a secret?'

'A disgrace which you will understand, and for which you can comfort me.'

'A disgrace!—You? . . .'

'Yes, I—Count Paz, am madly in love with a girl who was touring round France with the Bouthor family, people who have a circus after the pattern of Franconi's, but who only perform at fairs! I got her an engagement from the manager of the Cirque-Olympique.'

'Is she handsome?' asked the Countess.

'In my eyes,' he replied sadly. 'Malaga, that is her name to the public, is strong, nimble, and supple. Why do I prefer her to every other woman in the world?—Indeed, I cannot tell you. When I see her with her black hair tied back with blue ribbons that float over her

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bare olive-tinted shoulders, dressed in a white tunic with a gilt border, and silk tights which make her appear a living Greek statue, her feet in frayed satin slippers, flourishing flags in her hand to the sound of a military band, and flying through an enormous hoop covered with paper which crashes in the air—when her horse rushes round at a gallop, and she gracefully drops on to him again, applauded, honestly applauded, by a whole people—well, it excites me.'

'More than a woman at a ball?' said Clémentine, with insinuating surprise.

'Yes,' said Paz in a choked voice. 'This splendid agility, this unfailing grace in constant peril, seem to me the greatest triumph of woman. Yes, Madame, Cinti and Malibran, Grisi and Taglioni, Pasta and Elsler, all who reign or ever reigned on the boards, seem to me unworthy to untie Malaga's shoe strings—Malaga, who can mount or dismount a horse at a mad gallop, who slips under him from the left to reappear on the right, who flutters about the most fiery steed like a white will-o'-the-wisp, who can stand on the tip of one toe and then drop, sitting with her feet hanging, on a horse still galloping round, and who finally stands on his back without any reins, knitting a stocking, beating eggs, or stirring an omelette, to the intense admiration of the people, the true people, the peasantry and soldiers. During the walk round, Madame, that enchanting Columbine used to carry chairs balanced on the tip of her nose, the prettiest Greek nose I ever saw. Malaga is dexterity personified. Her strength is Herculean; with her tiny fist or her little foot she can shake off three or four men. She is the goddess of athletics.'

'She must be stupid.'

'Oh!' cried Paz, 'she is as amusing as the heroine of *Peveril of the Peak*. As heedless as a gipsy, she says everything that comes into her head; she cares no more for the future than you care for the halfpence you throw

to a beggar, and she lets out really sublime things. Nothing will ever convince her that an old diplomate is a handsome young man, and a million of francs would not make her change her opinion. Her love for a man is a perpetual flattery. Enjoying really insolent health, her teeth are two-and-thirty Oriental pearls set in coral. Her "snout"—so she calls the lower part of her face—is, as Shakespeare has it, as fresh and sweet as a heifer's muzzle. And it can give bitter pain! She respects fine men, strong men—an Adolphus, an Augustus, an Alexander—acrobats and tumblers. Her teacher, a horrible Cassandro, thrashed her unmercifully; it cost thousands of blows to give her such agility, grace, and intrepidity.'

'You are drunk with Malaga!' said the Countess.

'Her name is Malaga only on the posters,' said Paz, with a look of annoyance. 'She lives in the Rue Saint-Lazare, in a little apartment on the third floor, in velvet and silk, like a princess. She leads two lives—one as a dancer, and one as a pretty woman.'

'And does she love you?'

'She loves me—you will laugh—solely because I am a Pole. She sees in every Pole a Poniatowski, as he is shown in the print, jumping into the Elster; for to every Frenchman the Elster, in which it is impossible to drown, is a foaming torrent which swallowed up Poniatowski.—And with all this I am very unhappy, Madame——'

Clémentine was touched by a tear of rage in the Captain's eye.

'You love the extraordinary, you men,' said she.

'And you?' asked Thaddeus.

'I know Adam so well that I know he could forget me for some acrobatic tumbler like your Malaga. But where did you find her?'

'At Saint-Cloud, last September, at the fair. She was standing in a corner of the platform covered with canvas

where the performers walk round. Her comrades, all dressed as Poles, were making a terrific Babel. I saw her silent and dreamy, and fancied I could guess that her thoughts were melancholy. Was there not enough to make her so—a girl of twenty? That was what touched me.'

The Countess was leaning in a bewitching attitude, pensive, almost sad.

'Poor, poor Thaddeus!' she exclaimed. And with the good-fellowship of a really great lady, she added, not without a meaning smile, 'Go; go to the circus!'

Thaddeus took her hand and kissed it, dropping a hot tear, and then went out. After having invented a passion for a circus-rider, he must give it some reality. Of his whole story nothing had been true but the minute's attention he had given to the famous Malaga, the rider of the Bouthor troupe at Saint-Cloud; her name had just caught his eye on an advertisement of the circus. The clown, bribed by a single five-franc piece, had told Paz that the girl was a foundling, or had perhaps been stolen.

Thaddeus now went to the circus and saw the handsome horsewoman again. For ten francs, a groom—they fill the place of dressers at a circus—informed him that Malaga's name was Marguerite Turquet, and that she lived in the Rue des Fossés-du-Temple, on a fifth floor.

Next day, with death in his soul, Paz found his way to that quarter, and asked for Mademoiselle Turquet, in summer the understudy of the principal rider at the cirque, and in winter 'a super' in a Boulevard theatre.

'Malaga!' shouted the doorkeeper, rushing into the attic, 'here is a fine gentleman for you! He is asking Chapuzot all about you; and Chapuzot is cramming him to give me time to let you know.'

'Thank you, M'ame Chapuzot; but what will he say to find me ironing my gown?'

'Pooh, stuff! When a man is in love, he loves everything about you.'

'Is he an Englishman? They are fond of horses.'

'No. He looks to me like a Spaniard.'

'So much the worse. The Spaniards are down in the market they say.—Stay here, Madame Chapuzot, I shall not look so left to myself.'

'Who were you wanting, Monsieur?' said the woman, opening the door to Thaddeus.

'Mademoiselle Turquet.'

'My child,' said the porter's wife, wrapping her shawl round her, 'here is somebody asking for you.'

A rope on which some linen was airing knocked off the Captain's hat.

'What is your business, Monsieur?' asked Malaga, picking it up.

'I saw you at the circus; you remind me, Mademoiselle, of a daughter I lost; and out of affection for my Héloïse, whom you are so wonderfully like, I should wish to be of use to you if you will allow me.'

'Well, to be sure! But sit down, Monsieur le Général,' said Madame Chapuzot. 'You cannot say fairer—nor handsomer.'

'I am not by way of love-making, my good lady,' said Paz. 'I am a father in deep distress, eager to be cheated by a likeness.'

'And so I am to pass as your daughter?' said Malaga, very roguishly, and without suspecting the absolute truth of the statement.

'Yes,' said Paz. 'I will come sometimes to see you; and that the illusion may be perfect, I will place you in handsome lodgings, nicely furnished——'

'I shall have furniture of my own?' said Malaga, looking at Madame Chapuzot.

'And servants,' Paz went on; 'and live quite at your ease.'

Malaga looked at the stranger from under her brow.

'From what country are you, Monsieur?'

'I am a Pole.'

'Then I accept,' said she.

Paz went away, promising to call again.

'That is a tough one!' said Marguerite Turquet, looking at Madame Chapuzot. 'But I am afraid this man is wheedling me to humour some fancy. Well, I will risk it.'

A month after this whimsical scene, the fair circus-rider was established in rooms charmingly furnished by Count Adam's upholsterer, for Paz wished that his folly should be talked about in the Laginski household. Malaga, to whom the adventure was like an Arabian Nights' dream, was waited on by the Chapuzot couple—at once her servants and her confidants. The Chapuzots and Marguerite Turquet expected some startling climax; but at the end of three months, neither Malaga nor the Chapuzots could account for the Polish Count's fancy. Paz would spend about an hour there once a week, during which he sat in the drawing-room, never choosing to go either into Malaga's boudoir nor into her bedroom, which, in fact, he never entered in spite of the cleverest manœuvring on her part and on that of the Chapuzots. The Count inquired about the little incidents that varied the horsewoman's life, and on going away he always left two forty-franc pieces on the chimney-shelf.

'He looks dreadfully bored,' said Madame Chapuzot.

'Yes,' replied Malaga, 'that man is as cold as frost after a thaw.'

'He is a jolly good fellow, all the same,' cried Chapuzot, delighted to see himself dressed in blue Elbeuf cloth, and as smart as a Minister's office-messenger.

Paz, by his periodical tribute, made Marguerite Turquet an allowance of three hundred and twenty francs a month. This sum, added to her small earnings at the circus, secured her a splendid existence as compared with her past squalor. Strange tales were current

among the performers at the circus as to Malaga's good fortune. The girl's vanity allowed her rent to be stated at sixty thousand francs, instead of the modest six thousand which her rooms cost the prudent Captain. According to the clowns and supers, Malaga ate off silver plate; and she certainly came to the circus in pretty burnouses, in shawls, and elegant scarfs. And, to crown all, the Pole was the best fellow a circus-rider could come across; never tiresome, never jealous, leaving Malaga perfect freedom.

'Some women are so lucky!' said Malaga's rival. 'Such a thing would never happen to me, though I bring in a third of the receipts.'

Malaga wore smart 'coal-scuttles,' and sometimes gave herself airs in a carriage in the Bois de Boulogne, where the youth of fashion began to observe her. In short, Malaga was talked about in the flash world of equivocal women, and her good fortune was attacked by calumny. She was reported to be a somnambulist, and the Pole was said to be a magnetiser in search of the Philosopher's Stone. Other comments of a far more venomous taint made Malaga more inquisitive than Psyche; she reported them, with tears, to Paz.

'When I owe a woman a grudge,' said she to conclude, 'I do not culumniate her, I do not say that a man magnetises her to find stones. I say that she is a bad lot, and I prove it. Why do you get me into trouble?'

Paz was cruelly speechless.

Madame Chapuzot succeeded at last in discovering his name and title. Then, at the Hôtel Laginski, she ascertained some positive facts: Thaddeus was unmarried, he was not known to have a dead daughter either in Poland or France. Malaga could not help feeling a thrill of terror.

'My dear child,' said Madame Chapuzot, that monster——'

A man who was satisfied with gazing at a beautiful

creature like Malaga—gazing at her by stealth—from under his brows—not daring to come to any decision—without any confidence; such a man, in Madame Chapuzot's mind, must be a monster. 'That monster is breaking you in, to lead you on to something illegal or criminal. God above us! if you were to be brought up at the Assizes—and it makes me shudder from head to foot to think of it, I quake only to speak of it—or in the Criminal Court, and your name was in the newspapers! . . . Do you know what I should do in your place? Well, in your place, to make all safe, I should warn the police.'

One day, when mad notions were fermenting in Malaga's brain, Paz having laid his gold pieces on the velvet chimney-shelf, she snatched up the money and flung it in his face, saying, 'I will not take stolen money!'

The Captain gave the gold to the Chapuzots, and came no more.

Clémentine was spending the summer on the estate of her uncle, the Marquis de Ronquerolles, in Burgundy.

When the troupe at the circus no longer saw Thaddeus in his seat, there was a great talk among the artists. Malaga's magnanimity was regarded as folly by some, as cunning by others. The Pole's behaviour, as explained to the most experienced of the women, seemed inexplicable. In the course of a single week, Thaddeus received thirty-seven letters from women of the town. Happily for him, his singular reserve gave rise to no curiosity in fashionable circles, and remained the subject of discussion in the flash set only.

Two months later, the handsome rider, swamped in debt, wrote to Count Paz the following letter, which the dandies of the day regarded as a masterpiece:—

'You, whom I still venture to call my friend, will you not take pity on me after what passed between us, which

you took so ill? My heart disowns everything that could hurt your feelings. If I was so happy as to make you feel some charm when you sat near me, as you used to do, come again . . . otherwise, I shall sink into despair. Poverty has come upon me already, and you do not know what stupid things it brings with it. Yesterday I lived on a herring for two sous and one sou's worth of bread. Is that a breakfast for the woman you love? The Chapuzots have left me after seeming so devoted to me. Your absence has shown me the shallowness of human attachment. A bailiff, who turned a deaf ear to me, has seized everything on behalf of the landlord, who has no pity, and of the jeweller, who will not wait even ten days; for with you men, credit vanishes with confidence. What a position for a woman who has nothing to reproach herself for but a little amusement! My dear friend, I have taken everything of any value to my uncle's; I have nothing left but my memory of you, and the hard weather is coming on. All through the winter I shall have no fire, since nothing but melodrama is played at the Boulevard, in which I have nothing to do but tiny parts, which do not show a woman off. How could you misunderstand my noble feelings towards you, for, after all, we have not two ways of expressing our gratitude? How is it that you, who seemed so pleased to see me comfortable, could leave me in misery? Oh, my only friend on earth, before I go back to travel from fair to fair with the Bouthors—for so, at any rate, I can make my living—forgive me for wanting to know if I have really lost you for ever. If I should happen to think of you just as I was jumping through the hoop, I might break my legs by missing time. Come what may, I am yours for life. MARGUERITE TURQUET.'

'This letter,' exclaimed Thaddeus, shouting with laughter, 'is well worth my ten thousand francs.'

Clémentine came home on the following day, and Paz

saw her once more, lovelier and more gracious than ever. During dinner the Countess preserved an air of perfect indifference towards Thaddeus, but a scene took place between the Count and his wife after their friend had left. Thaddeus, with an affectation of asking Adam's advice, had left Malaga's letter in his hands, as if by accident.

'Poor Thaddeus!' said Adam to his wife, after seeing Paz make his escape. 'What a misfortune for a man of his superior stamp to be the plaything of a ballet-girl of the lowest class! He will love anything; he will degrade himself; he will be unrecognisable before long. Here, my dear, read that,' and he handed her Malaga's letter.

Clémentine read the note, which smelt of tobacco, and tossed it away with disgust.

'However thick the bandage over his eyes may be, he must have found something out. Malaga must have played him some faithless trick.'

'And he is going back to her!' cried Clémentine. 'He will forgive her! You men can have no pity for any but those horrible women!'

'They want it so badly!' said Adam.

'Thaddeus did himself justice—by keeping to himself!' said she.

'Oh, my dearest, you go too far,' said the Count, who, though he was at first delighted to lower his friend in his wife's eyes, would not the death of the sinner.

Thaddeus, who knew Adam well, had begged for absolute secrecy; he had only spoken, he said, as an excuse for his dissipations, and to beg his friend to allow him to have a thousand crowns for Malaga.

'He is a man of great pride,' Adam went on.

'What do you mean?'

'Well, to have spent no more than ten thousand francs on her, and to wait for such a letter as that to rouse him before taking her the money to pay her debts! For a Pole, on my honour! . . .'

'But he may ruin you!' said Clémentine in the acrid tone of a Parisian woman when she expresses her cat-like distrustfulness.

'Oh! I know him,' said Adam. 'He would sacrifice Malaga to us.'

'We shall see,' replied the Countess.

'If it were needful for his happiness, I should not hesitate to ask him to give her up. Constantine tells me that during the time when he was seeing her, Paz, usually so sober, sometimes came in quite fuddled. If he allowed himself to take to drink, I should be as much grieved as if he were my son.'

'Do not tell me any more!' cried the Countess with another gesture of disgust.

Two days later the Captain could see in her manner, in the tone of her voice, in her eyes, the terrible results of Adam's betrayal. Scorn had opened gulfs between him and this charming woman. And he fell forthwith into deep melancholy, devoured by this thought, 'You have made yourself unworthy of her.' Life became a burden to him; the bright sunshine was gloomy in his eyes. Nevertheless, under these floods of bitter thought, he had some happy moments: he could now give himself up without danger to his admiration for the Countess, who never paid him the slightest attention when, at a party, hidden in a corner, mute, all eyes and all heart, he did not lose one of her movements, not a note of her song when she sang. He lived in this enchanting life: he might himself groom the horse that she was to ride, and devote himself to the management of her splendid house with redoubled care for its interests.

These unspoken joys were buried in his heart like those of a mother, whose child never knows anything of his mother's heart: for is it knowledge so long as even one thing remains unknown? Was not this finer than Petrarch's chaste passion for Laura, which, after all, was well repaid by a wealth of glory, and by the triumph of

the poetry she had inspired? Was not the emotion which Assas felt in dying, in truth a whole life? This emotion Paz felt every day without dying, but also without the guerdon of immortality.

What is there in love, that Paz, notwithstanding these secret delights, was consumed by sorrow? The Catholic religion has so elevated love that she has married it inseparably, so to speak, to esteem and generosity. Love does not exist apart from the fine qualities of which man is proud, and so rarely are we loved if we are contemned, that Thaddeus was perishing of his self-inflicted wounds. Only to hear her say that she could have loved him, and then to die! The hapless lover would have thought his life well paid for. The torments of his previous position seemed to him preferable to living close to her, loading her with his generosity without being appreciated or understood. In short, he wanted the price of his virtue.

He grew thin and yellow, and fell so thoroughly ill, consumed by low fever, that during the month of January he kept his bed, though refusing to see a physician. Count Adam grew extremely uneasy about his poor Thaddeus. The Countess then was so cruel as to say, when they were together one day, 'Let him alone; do not you see that he has some Olympian remorse?'

This speech stung Thaddeus to the courage of despair; he got up, went out, tried some amusement, and recovered his health.

In the month of February Adam lost a rather considerable sum at the Jockey Club, and, being afraid of his wife, he begged Thaddeus to place this sum to the account of his extravagance for Malaga.

'What is there strange in the notion that the ballet-girl should have cost you twenty thousand francs? It concerns no one but me. Whereas, if the Countess should know that I had lost it at play, I should fall

in her esteem, and she would be in alarm for the future.'

'This to crown all!' cried Thaddeus, with a deep sigh.

'Ah! Thaddeus, this service would make us quits if I were not already the debtor.'

'Adam, you may have children. Give up gambling,' said his friend.

'Twenty thousand francs more that Malaga has cost us!' exclaimed the Countess some days after, on discovering Adam's generosity to Paz. 'And ten thousand before—that is thirty thousand in all! Fifteen hundred francs a year, the price of my box at the Italian opera, a whole fortune to many people. . . . Oh! you Poles are incomprehensible!' cried she, as she picked some flowers in her beautiful conservatory. 'You care no more than that!'

'Poor Paz——'

'Poor Paz, poor Paz!' she echoed, interrupting him. 'What good does he do us? I will manage the house myself! Give him the hundred louis a year that he refused, and let him make his own arrangements with the Olympic Circus.'

'He is of the greatest use to us; he has saved us at least forty thousand francs this year. In short, my dearest, he has placed a hundred thousand francs for us in Nucingen's bank, and a steward would have netted them.'

Clémentine was softened, but she was not the less hard on Thaddeus.

Some days after she desired Paz to come to her in her boudoir, where, a year since, she had been startled by comparing him with the Count. This time she received him alone, without any suspicion of danger.

'My dear Paz,' said she, with the careless familiarity of fine folks to their inferiors, 'if you love Adam as you say you do, you will do one thing which he will never

ask, but which I, as his wife, do not hesitate to require of you——'

'It is about Malaga?' said Thaddeus with deep irony.

'Well, yes, it is,' she said. 'If you want to end your days with us, if you wish that we should remain friends, give her up. How can an old soldier——'

'I am but five-and-thirty, and have not a grey hair!'

'You look as if you had,' said she, 'and that is the same thing. How can a man so capable of putting two and two together, so superior . . .'

What was horrible was that she spoke the word with such an evident intention of rousing in him the nobleness of soul which she believed to be dead.

'So superior as you are,' she went on, after a little pause, which a gesture from Paz forced upon her, 'allow yourself to be entrapped like a boy. Your affair with her has made Malaga famous. — Well! My uncle wanted to see her, and he saw her. My uncle is not the only one; Malaga is very ready to receive all these gentlemen.—I believed you to be high-minded.—Take shame to yourself! Come, would she be an irreparable loss to you?'

'Madame, if I knew of any sacrifice by which I might recover your esteem, it would soon be made; but to give up Malaga is not a sacrifice——'

'In your place that is what I should say if I were a man,' replied Clémentine. 'Well, but if I take it as a great sacrifice, there is nothing to be angry at.'

Paz went away, fearing he might do some mad act; he felt his brain invaded by crazy notions. He went out for a walk, lightly dressed in spite of the cold, but failed to cool the burning of his face and brow. 'I believed you to be high-minded!' He heard the words again and again. 'And scarcely a year ago,' said he to himself, 'to hear Clémentine, I had beaten the Russians single-handed!' He thought of quitting the Laginski household, of asking to be sent on service in the Spahi

regiment, and getting himself killed in Africa; but a dreadful fear checked him: 'What would become of them without me? They would soon be ruined. Poor Countess, what a horrible life it would be for her to be reduced even to thirty thousand francs a year! Come,' said he to himself, 'since she can never be yours, courage, finish your work!'

As all the world knows, since 1830 the Carnival in Paris has grown to prodigious proportions, making it European, and burlesque, and animated to a far greater degree than the departed carnivals of Venice. Is this because, since fortunes have so enormously diminished, Parisians have thought of amusing themselves collectively, just as in their clubs they have a drawing-room without any mistress of the house, without politeness, and quite cheap? Be this as it may, the month of March was prodigal of those balls, where dancing, farce, coarse fun, delirium, grotesque figures, and banter made keen by Paris wit, achieved gigantic results. This madness had its Pandemonium at that time in the Rue Saint-Honoré, and its Napoleon in Musard, a little man born to rule an orchestra as tremendous as the rampant mob, and to conduct a galop—that whirl of witches at their Sabbath, and one of Auber's triumphs, for the galop derived its form and its poetry from the famous galop in *Gustavus*. May not this vehement finale serve as a symbol of an age when, for fifty years, everything has rushed on with the swiftness of a dream?

Now, our grave Thaddeus, bearing an immaculate image in his heart, went to Malaga to invite her, the queen of carnival dancing, to spend an evening at Musard's as soon as he learned that the Countess, disguised to the teeth, was intending to come with two other young ladies, escorted by their husbands, to see the curious spectacle of one of these monster balls. On Shrove Tuesday night, in the year of grace 1838, at four o'clock in the morning, the Countess, wrapped in a

black domino, and seated on a bench of one of the amphitheatres of the Babylonian hall where Valentino has since given his concerts, saw Thaddeus, dressed as Robert Macaire, leading the circus-rider in the costume of a savage, her head dressed with nodding plumes like a horse at a coronation, and leaping among the groups like a perfect Jack-o'-lantern.

'Oh!' exclaimed Clémentine to her husband, 'you Poles are not men of character. Who would not have felt sure of Thaddeus? He gave me his word, not knowing that I should be here and see all without being seen.'

Some days after this she invited Paz to dinner. After dinner, Adam left them together, and Clémentine scolded Thaddeus in such a way as to make him feel that she would no longer have him about the house.

'Indeed, Madame,' said Thaddeus humbly, 'you are quite right. I am a wretch; I had pledged my word. But what can I do? I put off the parting with Malaga till after the Carnival. . . . And I will be honest with you; the woman has so much power over me . . .'

'A woman who gets herself turned out of Musard's by the police, and for such dancing?'

'I admit it; I sit condemned; I will quit your house. But you know Adam. If I hand over to you the conduct of your affairs, you will have to exert great energy. Though I have the vice of Malaga, I know how to keep an eye on your concerns, how to manage your household, and superintend the smallest details. Allow me then to remain till I have seen you qualified to continue my system of management. You have now been married three years, and are safe from the first follies consequent on the honeymoon. The ladies of Paris society, even with the highest titles, understand very well in these days how to control a fortune and a household. . . . Well, as soon as I am assured, not of your capacity, but of your firmness, I will leave Paris.'

'It is Thaddeus of Warsaw that speaks, not Thaddeus of the circus. Come back to us cured.'

'Cured?—Never!' said Paz, his eyes fixed on Clémentine's pretty feet. 'You cannot know, Countess, all the spice, the unexpectedness there is in that woman's wit.' And feeling his courage fail him, he added: 'There is not a single woman of fashion, with her prim airs, who is worth that frank young animal nature.'

'In fact, I should not choose to have anything in me of the animal!' said the Countess, with a flashing look like an adder in a rage.

After that day Count Paz explained to Clémentine all her affairs, made himself her tutor, taught her the difficulties of managing her property, the real cost of things, and the way to avoid being too extensively robbed by her people. She might trust Constantine, and make him her major-domo. Thaddeus had trained Constantine. By the month of May he thought the Countess perfectly capable of administering her fortune; for Clémentine was one of those clear-sighted women whose instincts are alert, with an inborn genius for household rule.

The situation thus naturally brought about by Thaddeus took a sudden turn most distressing for him, for his sufferings were not so light as he made them seem. The hapless lover had not reckoned with accident. Adam fell very seriously ill. Thaddeus, instead of leaving, installed himself as his friend's sick-nurse. His devotedness was indefatigable. A woman who had had an interest in looking through the telescope of foresight would have seen in the Captain's heroism the sort of punishment which noble souls inflict on themselves to subdue their involuntary thoughts of sin; but women see everything or nothing, according to their frame of mind; love is their sole luminary.

For forty-five days Paz watched and nursed Mitgislas without seeming to have a thought of Malaga, for the

excellent reason that he never did think of her. Clémentine, seeing Adam at death's door, and yet not dead, had a consultation of the most famous doctors.

'If he gets through this,' said the most learned of the physicians, 'it can only be by an effort of nature. It lies with those who nurse him to watch for the moment and aid nature. The Count's life is in the hands of his attendants.'

Thaddeus went to communicate this verdict to Clémentine, who was sitting in the Chinese pavilion, as much to rest after her fatigues as to leave the field free for the doctors, and not to be in their way. As he trod the gravelled paths leading from the boudoir to the rockery on which the Chinese summer-house was built, Clémentine's lover felt as though he were in one of the gulfs described by Alighieri. The unhappy man had never foreseen the chance of becoming Clémentine's husband, and he had bogged himself in a swamp of mud. When he reached her his face was set, sublime in its despair. Like Medusa's head, it communicated terror.

'He is dead?' said Clémentine.

'They have given no hope; at least, they leave it to nature. Do not go in just yet. They are still there, and Bianchon himself is examining him.'

'Poor fellow!—I wonder whether I have ever worried him,' she said.

'You have made him very happy; be quite easy on that point,' said Thaddeus; 'and you have been indulgent to him——'

'The loss will be irreparable.'

'But, dear lady, supposing the Count should die, had you not formed your opinion of him?'

'I do not love him blindly,' she said; 'but I loved as a wife ought to love her husband.'

'Then,' said Thaddeus, in a voice new to Clémentine's experience of him, 'you ought to feel less regret than if you were losing one of those men who are a woman's

pride, her love, her whole life! You may be frank with such a friend as I am. . . . I shall regret him—I! Long before your marriage I had made him my child, and I have devoted my life to him. I shall have no interest left on earth. But life still has charms for a widow of four-and-twenty.'

'Why, you know very well that I love no one,' said she, with the roughness of sorrow.

'You do not know yet what it is to love,' said Thaddeus.

'Oh! husband for husband, I have sense enough to prefer a child like my poor Adam to a superior man. For nearly a month now we have been asking ourselves, "Will he live?" These fluctuations have prepared me, as they have you, for this end. I may be frank with you?—Well, then, I would give part of my life to save Adam's. Does not independence for a woman, here in Paris, mean liberty to be gulled by the pretence of love in men who are ruined or profligate? I have prayed God to spare me my husband—so gentle, such a good fellow, so little fractious, and who was beginning to be a little afraid of me.'

'You are honest, and I like you the better for it,' said Thaddeus, taking Clémentine's hands, which she allowed him to kiss. 'In such a solemn moment there is indescribable satisfaction in finding a woman devoid of hypocrisy. It is possible to talk to you.—Consider the future; supposing God should not listen to you—and I am one of those who are most ready to cry to Him: Spare my friend!—for these fifty nights past have not made my eyes heavy, and if thirty days and thirty nights more care are needed, you, Madame, may sleep while I watch. I will snatch him from death, if, as they say, he can be saved by care. But if, in spite of you, in spite of me, the Count is dead. Well, then, if you were loved, or worshipped, by a man whose heart and character were worthy of yours——'

'I have perhaps madly wished to be loved, but I have never met——'

'Supposing you were mistaken.'

Clémentine looked steadily at Thaddeus, suspecting him less of loving her than of a covetous dream; she poured contempt on him by a glance, measuring him from head to foot, and crushed him with two words, 'Poor Malaga!' pronounced in those tones such as fine ladies alone can find in the gamut of their contempt.

She rose and left Thaddeus fainting, for she did not turn round, but walked with great dignity back to her boudoir, and thence up to her husband's room.

An hour later Paz returned to the sick man's bedside, and gave all his care to the Count, as though he had not received his own death-blow.

From that dreadful moment he became silent; he had a duel to fight with disease, and he carried it through in a way that excited the admiration of the doctors. At any hour his eyes were always beaming like two lamps. Without showing the slightest resentment towards Clémentine, he listened to her thanks without accepting them; he seemed deaf. He had said to himself, 'She shall owe Adam's life to me!' and these words he had, as it were, written in letters of fire in the sick man's room.

At the end of a fortnight Clémentine was obliged to give up some of the nursing, or risk falling ill from so much fatigue. Paz was inexhaustible. At last, about the end of August, Bianchon, the family doctor, answered for the Count's life—

'Ah, Madame,' said he to Clémentine, 'you are under not the slightest obligation to me. But for his friend we could not have saved him!'

On the day after the terrible scene in the Chinese pavilion, the Marquis de Ronquerolles had come to see his nephew, for he was setting out for Russia with a

secret mission; and Paz, overwhelmed by the previous evening, had spoken a few words to the diplomate.

On the very day when Count Adam and his wife went out for the first time for a drive, at the moment when the carriage was turning from the steps, an orderly came into the courtyard and asked for Count Paz. Thaddeus, who was sitting with his back to the horses, turned round to take a letter bearing the stamp of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, and put it into the side-pocket of his coat, with a decision which precluded any questions on the part of Clémentine or Adam. It cannot be denied that persons of good breeding are masters of the language that uses no speech. Nevertheless, as they reached the Porte Maillot, Adam, assuming the privilege of a convalescent whose whims must be indulged, said to Thaddeus—

'There can be no indiscretions between two brothers who love each other as you and I do; you know what is in that letter; tell me, I am in a fever of curiosity.'

Clémentine looked at Thaddeus as an angry woman can, and said to her husband, 'He has been so sulky with me these two months, that I shall take good care not to press him.'

'Oh dear me!' replied Thaddeus, 'as I cannot hinder the newspapers from publishing it, I may very well reveal the secret. The Emperor Nicholas does me the favour of appointing me Captain on service in a regiment starting with the Khiva Expedition.'

'And you are going?' cried Adam.

'I shall go, my dear fellow. I came as Captain, and as Captain I return. Malaga might lead me to make a fool of myself. We shall dine together to-morrow for the last time. If I did not set out in September for St. Petersburg, I should have to travel overland, and I am not rich. I must leave Malaga her little independence. How can I fail to provide for the future of the only woman who has understood me? Malaga thinks

me a great man! Malaga thinks me handsome! Malaga may perhaps be faithless, but she would go through——'

'Through a hoop for you, and fall on her feet on horseback!' said Clémentine, sharply.

'Oh, you do not know Malaga,' said the Captain, with deep bitterness, and an ironical look which made Clémentine uneasy and silent.

'Farewell to the young trees of this lovely Bois de Boulogne, where Parisian ladies drive, and the exiles wander who have found a home here. I know that my eyes will never again see the green trees of the Allée de Mademoiselle, or of the Route des Dames, nor the acacias, nor the cedar at the Ronds-points.

'On the Asiatic frontier, obedient to the schemes of the great Emperor I have chosen to be my master, promoted perhaps to command an army, for sheer courage, for constantly risking my life, I may indeed regret the Champs-Elyseés where you, once, made me take a place in the carriage, by your side.—Finally, I shall never cease to regret the severity of Malaga—of the Malaga I am at this moment thinking of.'

This was said in a tone that made Clémentine shiver.

'Then you love Malaga very truly?' she said.

'I have sacrificed for her the honour we never sacrifice——'

'Which?'

'That which we would fain preserve at any cost in the eyes of the idol we worship.'

After this speech Thaddeus kept impenetrable silence; he broke it only when, as they drove down the Champs-Elysées, he pointed to a wooden structure and said, 'There is the circus!'

Before their last dinner he went to the Russian Embassy for a few minutes, and from thence to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and he started for le Havre next morning before the Countess and Adam were up.

'I have lost a friend,' said Adam, with tears in his

eyes, as he learned that Count Paz was gone, 'a friend in the truest sense of the word, and I cannot think what has made him flee from my house as if it were the plague. We are not the sort of friends to quarrel over a woman,' he went on, looking full at Clémentine, 'and yet all he said yesterday about Malaga—But he never laid the tip of his finger on the girl.'

'How do you know?' asked Clémentine.

'Well, I was naturally curious to see Mademoiselle Turquet, and the poor girl cannot account for Thaddeus' extraordinary reserve——'

'That is enough,' said the Countess, going off to her own room, and saying to herself, 'I have surely been the victim of some sublime hoax.'

She had scarcely made the reflection, when Constantine placed in her hands the following letter, which Thaddeus had scrawled in the night:—

'Countess,—To go to be killed in the Caucasus, and to bear the burden of your scorn, is too much; a man should die unmutilated. I loved you from the first time I saw you, as a man loves the woman he will love for ever, even when she is faithless—I, under obligations to Adam, whom you chose and married—I, so poor, the volunteer steward, devoted to your household. In this dreadful catastrophe I found a delightful existence. To be an indispensable wheel in the machine, to know myself useful to your luxury and comfort, was a source of joy to me; and if that joy had been keen when Adam alone was my care, think what it must have been when the woman I worshipped was at once the cause and the effect! I have known all the joys of motherhood in my love; and I accepted life on those terms. Like the beggars on the high roads, I built myself a hut of stones on the skirts of your beautiful home, but without holding out my hand for alms. I, poor and unhappy, but blinded by Adam's happiness,

I was the donor. Yes, you were hedged in by a love as pure as that of a guardian angel; it watched while you slept; it caressed you with a look as you passed by; it was glad merely to exist; in short, you were the sunshine of home to the hapless exile who is now writing to you, with tears in his eyes, as he recalls the happiness of those early days.

'At the age of eighteen, with no one to love me, I had chosen as an ideal mistress a charming woman at Warsaw, to whom I referred all my thoughts and my wishes, the queen of my days and nights. This woman knew nothing of it, but why inform her? For my part, what I loved was love.

'You may fancy, from this adventure of my boyhood, how happy I was, living within the sphere of your influence, grooming your horse, picking out new gold pieces for your purse, superintending the splendour of your table and your entertainments, seeing you eclipse fortunes greater than your own by my good management. With what zeal did I not rush round Paris when Adam said to me, "Thaddeus, *She* wants this or that!" It was one of those joys for which there are no words. You have now and again wished for some trifle within a certain time which has compelled me to feats of expedition, driving for six or seven hours in a cab; and what happiness it has been to walk in your service. When I have watched you smiling in the midst of your flowers without being seen by you, I have forgotten that no one loved me—in short, at such moments I was but eighteen again.

'Sometimes, when my happiness turned my brain, I would go at night and kiss the spot where your feet had left, for me, a luminous trace, just as of old I had stolen, with a thief's miraculous skill, to kiss a key which Countess Ladislas had touched on opening a door. The air you breathed was embalmed; to me it was fresh life to breathe it; and I felt, as they say is the case in the

tropics, overwhelmed by an atmosphere surcharged with creative elements. I must tell you all these things to account for the strange fatuity of my involuntary thoughts. I would have died sooner than divulge my secret.

'You may remember those few days when you were curious, when you wanted to see the worker of the wonders which had at last struck you with surprise. I believed—forgive me, Madame—I believed that you would love me. Your kindliness, your looks—interpreted by a lover—seemed fraught with so much danger to me that I took up Malaga, knowing that there are *liaisons* which no woman can forgive; I took the girl up at the moment when I saw that my love was inevitably infectious. Overwhelm me now with the scorn which you poured upon me so freely when I did not deserve it; but I think I may be quite sure that if, on the evening when your aunt took the Count out, I had said what I have here written, having once said it I should have been like the tame tiger who has at last set his teeth in living flesh, and who scents warm blood. . . .

'*Midnight.*

'I could write no more, the memory of that evening was too vivid! Yes, I was then in a delirium! I saw expectancy in your eyes; victory and its crimson banners may have burned in mine and fascinated yours. My crime was to think such things—and perhaps wrongly. You alone can be judge of that fearful scene when I succeeded in crushing love, desire, the most stupendous forces of manhood under the icy hand of gratitude which must be eternal. Your terrible scorn punished me. You have showed me that neither disgust nor contempt can ever be got over. I love you like a madman. I must have gone away if Adam had died. There is all the more reason since Adam is saved. I did not snatch my friend from the grave to betray him. And, indeed, my departure is the due punishment for the thought that

came to me that I would let him die when the physicians said his life depended on his attendants.

'Farewell, Madame; in leaving Paris I lose everything, but you lose nothing in parting with yours most faithfully, THADDEUS PAZ.'

'If my poor Adam says he has lost a friend, what have I lost?' thought Clémentine, sitting dejected, with her eyes fixed on a flower in the carpet.

This is the note which Constantine delivered privately to his master—

'MY DEAR MITGISLAS,—Malaga has told me all. For the sake of your happiness, never let a word escape you in Clémentine's presence as to your visits to the circus-rider; let her still believe that Malaga costs me a hundred thousand francs. With the Countess's character she will not forgive you either your losses at play or your visits to Malaga.—I am not going to Khiva, but to the Caucasus. I have a fit of spleen, and at the pace I mean to go, in three months I shall be Prince Paz, or dead. Farewell; though I have drawn sixty thousand francs out of Nucingen's, we are quits.

'THADDEUS.'

'Idiot that I am! I very nearly betrayed myself just now by speaking of the circus-rider!' said Adam to himself.

Thaddeus has been gone three years, and the papers do not as yet mention any Prince Paz. Countess Laginska takes a keen interest in the Emperor Nicholas' expeditions; she is a Russian at heart, and reads with avidity all the news from that country. Once or twice a year she says to the Ambassador, with an affectation of indifference, 'Do you know what has become of our poor friend Paz?'

Alas! most Parisian women, keen-eyed and subtle as they are supposed to be, pass by—and always will pass by—such an one as Paz without observing him. Yes, more than one Paz remains misunderstood; but, fearful thought! some are misunderstood even when they are loved. The simplest woman in the world requires some little coxcombry in the greatest man; and the most heroic love counts for nothing if it is uncut; it needs the arts of the polisher and the jeweller.

In the month of January 1842 Countess Laginska, beautified by gentle melancholy, inspired a mad passion in the Comte de la Palférine, one of the most audacious bucks of Paris at this day. La Palférine understood the difficulty of conquering a woman guarded by a chimera; to triumph over this bewitching woman, he trusted to a surprise, and to the assistance of a woman who, being a little jealous of Clémentine, would lend herself to plot the chances of the adventure.

Clémentine, incapable with all her wit of suspecting such treachery, was so imprudent as to go with this false friend to the masked ball at the opera. At about three in the morning, carried away by the excitement of the ball, Clémentine, for whom La Palférine had exhausted himself in attentions, consented to sup with him, and was getting into the lady's carriage. At this critical moment she was seized by a strong arm, and in spite of her cries placed in her own carriage, which was standing with the door open, though she did not know that it was waiting.

'He has not left Paris!' she exclaimed, recognising Thaddeus, who ran off when he saw the carriage drive away with the Countess.

Had ever another woman such a romance in her life?

Clémentine is always hoping to see Paz again.

PARIS, *January* 1842.

ALBERT SAVARUS

To Madame Emile Girardin

One of the few drawing-rooms where, under the Restoration, the Archbishop of Besançon was sometimes to be seen, was that of the Baronne de Watteville, to whom he was particularly attached on account of her religious sentiments.

A word as to this lady, the most important lady of Besançon.

Monsieur de Watteville, a descendant of the famous Watteville, the most successful and illustrious of murderers and renegades—his extraordinary adventures are too much a part of history to be related here—this nineteenth century Monsieur de Watteville was as gentle and peaceable as his ancestor of the *Grand Siècle* had been passionate and turbulent. After living in the *Comté*[1] like a wood-louse in the crack of a wainscot, he had married the heiress of the celebrated house of Rupt. Mademoiselle de Rupt brought twenty thousand francs a year in the funds to add to the ten thousand francs a year in real estate of the Baron de Watteville. The Swiss gentleman's coat-of-arms (the Wattevilles are Swiss) was then borne as an escutcheon of pretence on the old shield of the Rupts. The marriage, arranged in 1802, was solemnised in 1815 after the second Restoration. Within three years of the birth of a daughter all Madame de Watteville's grandparents were dead, and

[1] La Franche Comté.

their estates wound up. Monsieur de Watteville's house was then sold, and they settled in the Rue de la Préfecture in the fine old mansion of the Rupts, with an immense garden stretching to the Rue du Perron. Madame de Watteville, devout as a girl, became even more so after her marriage. She is one of the queens of the saintly brotherhood which gives the upper circles of Besançon a solemn air and prudish manners in harmony with the character of the town.

Monsieur le Baron de Watteville, a dry, lean man devoid of intelligence, looked worn out without any one knowing whereby, for he enjoyed the profoundest ignorance ; but as his wife was a red-haired woman, and of a stern nature that became proverbial (we still say 'as sharp as Madame de Watteville'), some wits of the legal profession declared that he had been worn against that rock—*Rupt* is obviously derived from *rupes*. Scientific students of social phenomena will not fail to have observed that Rosalie was the only offspring of the union between the Wattevilles and the Rupts.

Monsieur de Watteville spent his existence in a handsome workshop with a lathe ; he was a turner ! As subsidiary to this pursuit, he took up a fancy for making collections. Philosophical doctors, devoted to the study of madness, regard this tendency towards collecting as a first degree of mental aberration when it is set on small things. The Baron de Watteville treasured shells and geological fragments of the neighbourhood of Besançon. Some contradictory folk, especially women, would say of Monsieur de Watteville, 'He has a noble soul ! He perceived from the first days of his married life that he would never be his wife's master, so he threw himself into a mechanical occupation and good living.'

The house of the Rupts was not devoid of a certain magnificence worthy of Louis XIV., and bore traces of the nobility of the two families who had mingled in 1815. The chandeliers of glass cut in the shape of

leaves, the brocades, the damask, the carpets, the gilt furniture, were all in harmony with the old liveries and the old servants. Though served in blackened family plate, round a looking-glass tray furnished with Dresden china, the food was exquisite. The wines selected by Monsieur de Watteville, who, to occupy his time and vary his employments, was his own butler, enjoyed a sort of fame throughout the department. Madame de Watteville's fortune was a fine one; while her husband's, which consisted only of the estate of Rouxey, worth about ten thousand francs a year, was not increased by inheritance. It is needless to add that in consequence of Madame de Watteville's close intimacy with the Archbishop, the three or four clever or remarkable Abbés of the diocese who were not averse to good feeding were very much at home at her house.

At a ceremonial dinner given in honour of I know not whose wedding, at the beginning of September 1834, when the women were standing in a circle round the drawing-room fire, and the men in groups by the windows, every one exclaimed with pleasure at the entrance of Monsieur l'Abbé de Grancey, who was announced.

'Well, and the lawsuit?' they all cried.

'Won!' replied the Vicar-General. 'The verdict of the Court, from which we had no hope, you know why——'

This was an allusion to the members of the First Court of Appeal of 1830; the Legitimists had almost all withdrawn.

'The verdict is in our favour on every point, and reverses the decision of the Lower Court.'

'Everybody thought you were done for.'

'And we should have been, but for me. I told our advocate to be off to Paris, and at the crucial moment I was able to secure a new pleader, to whom we owe our victory, a wonderful man——'

'At Besançon?' said Monsieur de Watteville, guilelessly.

'At Besançon,' replied the Abbé de Grancey.

'Oh yes, Savaron,' said a handsome young man sitting near the Baroness, and named de Soulas.

'He spent five or six nights over it; he devoured documents and briefs; he had seven or eight interviews of several hours with me,' continued Monsieur de Grancey, who had just reappeared at the Hôtel de Rupt for the first time in three weeks. 'In short, Monsieur Savaron has just completely beaten the celebrated lawyer whom our adversaries had sent for from Paris. This young man is wonderful, the bigwigs say. Thus the chapter is twice victorious; it has triumphed in law and also in politics, since it has vanquished Liberalism in the person of the Counsel of our Municipality.—"Our adversaries," so our advocate said, "must not expect to find readiness on all sides to ruin the Archbishoprics."—The President was obliged to enforce silence. All the townsfolk of Besançon applauded. Thus the possession of the buildings of the old convent remains with the Chapter of the Cathedral of Besançon. Monsieur Savaron, however, invited his Parisian opponent to dine with him as they came out of court. He accepted, saying, "Honour to every conqueror," and complimented him on his success without bitterness.'

'And where did you unearth this lawyer?' said Madame de Watteville. 'I never heard his name before.'

'Why, you can see his windows from hence,' replied the Vicar-General. 'Monsieur Savaron lives in the Rue du Perron; the garden of his house joins on to yours.'

'But he is not a native of the Comté,' said Monsieur de Watteville.

'So little is he a native of any place, that no one

knows where he comes from,' said Madame de Chavoncourt.

'But who is he?' asked Madame de Watteville, taking the Abbé's arm to go into the dining-room. 'If he is a stranger, by what chance has he settled at Besançon? It is a strange fancy for a barrister.'

'Very strange!' echoed Amédée de Soulas, whose biography is here necessary to the understanding of this tale.

In all ages France and England have carried on an exchanges of trifles, which is all the more constant because it evades the tyranny of the Custom-house. The fashion that is called English in Paris is called French in London, and this is reciprocal. The hostility of the two nations is suspended on two points—the uses of words and the fashion of dress. *God save the King*, the national air of England, is a tune written by Lulli for the chorus of Esther or of Athalie. Hoops, introduced at Paris by an Englishwoman, were invented in London, it is known why, by a Frenchwoman, the notorious Duchess of Portsmouth. They were at first so jeered at that the first Englishwoman who appeared in them at the Tuileries narrowly escaped being crushed by the crowd; but they were adopted. This fashion tyrannised over the ladies of Europe for half a century. At the peace of 1815, for a year, the long waists of the English were a standing jest; all Paris went to see Pothier and Brunet in *Les Anglaises pour rire*; but in 1816 and 1817 the belt of the Frenchwoman, which in 1814 cut her across the bosom, gradually descended till it reached the hips.

Within ten years England has made two little gifts to our language. The *Incroyable*, the *Merveilleux*, the *Élégant*, the three successors of the *petit-maître* of discreditable etymology, have made way for the 'dandy' and the 'lion.' The *lion* is not the parent of the *lionne*.

The *lionne* is due to the famous song by Alfred de Musset—

> '*Avez vous vu dans Barcelone*
>
> . . .
>
> *C'est ma maîtresse et ma lionne.*'

There has been a fusion—or, if you prefer it, a confusion—of the two words and the leading ideas. When an absurdity can amuse Paris, which devours as many masterpieces as absurdities, the provinces can hardly be deprived of them. So, as soon as the *lion* paraded Paris with his mane, his beard and moustaches, his waistcoats and his eyeglass, maintained in its place, without the help of his hands, by the contraction of his cheek and eye-socket, the chief towns of some departments had their sub-lions, who protested by the smartness of their trousers-straps against the untidiness of their fellow-townsmen.

Thus, in 1834, Besançon could boast of a *lion*, in the person of Monsieur Amédée-Sylvain de Soulas, spelt Souleyas at the time of the Spanish occupation. Amédée de Soulas is perhaps the only man in Besançon descended from a Spanish family. Spain sent men to manage her business in the Comté, but very few Spaniards settled there. The Soulas remained in consequence of their connection with Cardinal Granvelle. Young Monsieur de Soulas was always talking of leaving Besançon, a dull town, church-going, and not literary, a military centre and garrison town, of which the manners and customs and physiognomy are worth describing. This opinion allowed of his lodging, like a man uncertain of the future, in three very scantily furnished rooms at the end of the Rue Neuve, just where it opens into the Rue de la Préfecture.

Young Monsieur de Soulas could not possibly live without a tiger. This tiger was the son of one of his farmers, a small servant aged fourteen, thick-set, and named Babylas. The lion dressed his tiger very smartly—a short tunic-coat of iron-grey cloth, belted with patent

leather, bright blue plush breeches, a red waistcoat, polished leather top-boots, a shiny hat with black lacing, and brass buttons with the arms of Soulas. Amédée gave this boy white cotton gloves and his washing, and thirty-six francs a month to keep himself—a sum that seemed enormous to the grisettes of Besançon: four hundred and twenty francs a year to a child of fifteen, without counting extras! The extras consisted in the price for which he could sell his turned clothes, a present when Soulas exchanged one of his horses, and the perquisite of the manure. The two horses, treated with sordid economy, cost, one with another, eight hundred francs a year. His bills for articles received from Paris, such as perfumery, cravats, jewellery, patent blacking, and clothes, ran to another twelve hundred francs. Add to this the groom, or tiger, the horses, a very superior style of dress, and six hundred francs a year for rent, and you will see a grand total of three thousand francs.

Now, Monsieur de Soulas' father had left him only four thousand francs a year, the income from some cottage farms in rather bad repair, which required keeping up, a charge which lent painful uncertainty to the rents. The lion had hardly three francs a day left for food, amusements, and gambling. He very often dined out, and breakfasted with remarkable frugality. When he was positively obliged to dine at his own cost, he sent his tiger to fetch a couple of dishes from a cookshop, never spending more than twenty-five sous.

Young Monsieur de Soulas was supposed to be a spendthrift, recklessly extravagant, whereas the poor man made the two ends meet in the year with a keenness and skill which would have done honour to a thrifty housewife. At Besançon in those days no one knew how great a tax on a man's capital were six francs spent in polish to spread on his boots or shoes, yellow gloves at fifty sous a pair, cleaned in the deepest secrecy to

make them three times renewed, cravats costing ten francs, and lasting three months, four waistcoats at twenty-five francs, and trousers fitting close to the boots. How could he do otherwise, since we see women in Paris bestowing their special attention on simpletons who visit them, and cut out the most remarkable men by means of these frivolous advantages, which a man can buy for fifteen louis, and get his hair curled and a fine linen shirt into the bargain?

If this unhappy youth should seem to you to have become a *lion* on very cheap terms, you must know that Amédée de Soulas had been three times to Switzerland, by coach and in short stages, twice to Paris, and once from Paris to England. He passed as a well-informed traveller, and could say, 'In England, where I went . . .' The dowagers of the town would say to him, 'You, who have been in England . . .' He had been as far as Lombardy, and seen the shores of the Italian lakes. He read new books. Finally, when he was cleaning his gloves, the tiger Babylas replied to callers, 'Monsieur is very busy.' An attempt had been made to withdraw Monsieur Amédée de Soulas from circulation by pronouncing him 'A man of advanced ideas.' Amédée had the gift of uttering with the gravity of a native the commonplaces that were in fashion, which gave him the credit of being one of the most enlightened of the nobility. His person was garnished with fashionable trinkets, and his head furnished with ideas hall-marked by the press.

In 1834 Amédée was a young man of five-and-twenty, of medium height, dark, with a very prominent thorax, well-made shoulders, rather plump legs, feet already fat, white dimpled hands, a beard under his chin, moustaches worthy of the garrison, a good-natured, fat, rubicund face, a flat nose, and brown expressionless eyes; nothing Spanish about him. He was progressing rapidly in the direction of obesity, which would be fatal to his preten-

sions. His nails were well kept, his beard trimmed, the smallest details of his dress attended to with English precision. Hence Amédée de Soulas was looked upon as the finest man in Besançon. A hairdresser who waited upon him at a fixed hour—another luxury, costing sixty francs a year—held him up as the sovereign authority in matters of fashion and elegance.

Amédée slept late, dressed and went out towards noon, to go to one of his farms and practise pistol-shooting. He attached as much importance to this exercise as Lord Byron did in his later days. Then, at three o'clock he came home, admired on horseback by the grisettes and the ladies who happened to be at their windows. After an affectation of study or business, which seemed to engage him till four, he dressed to dine out, spent the evening in the drawing-rooms of the aristocracy of Besançon playing whist, and went home to bed at eleven. No life could be more above board, more prudent, or more irreproachable, for he punctually attended the services at church on Sundays and holy days.

To enable you to understand how exceptional is such a life, it is necessary to devote a few words to an account of Besançon. No town ever offered more deaf and dumb resistance to progress. At Besançon the officials, the employés, the military, in short, every one engaged in governing it, sent thither from Paris to fill a post of any kind, are all spoken of by the expressive general name of *the Colony*. The colony is neutral ground, the only ground where, as in church, the upper rank and the townsfolk of the place can meet. Here, fired by a word, a look, or gesture, are started those feuds between house and house, between a woman of rank and a citizen's wife, which endure till death, and widen the impassable gulf which parts the two classes of society. With the exception of the Clermont-Mont-Saint-Jean, the Beauffremont, the de Scey, and the Gramont families,

with a few others who come only to stay on their estates in the Comté, the aristocracy of Besançon dates no further back than a couple of centuries, the time of the conquest by Louis XIV. This little world is essentially of the *parlement*, and arrogant, stiff, solemn, uncompromising, haughty beyond all comparison, even with the Court of Vienna, for in this the nobility of Besançon would put the Viennese drawing-rooms to shame. As to Victor Hugo, Nodier, Fourier, the glories of the town, they are never mentioned, no one thinks about them. The marriages in these families are arranged in the cradle, so rigidly are the greatest things settled as well as the smallest. No stranger, no intruder, ever finds his way into one of these houses, and to obtain an introduction for the colonels or officers of title belonging to the first families in France when quartered there, requires efforts of diplomacy which Prince Talleyrand would gladly have mastered to use at a congress.

In 1834 Amédée was the only man in Besançon who wore trouser-straps; this will account for the young man's being regarded as a lion. And a little anecdote will enable you to understand the city of Besançon.

Some time before the opening of this story, the need arose at the préfecture for bringing an editor from Paris for the official newspaper, to enable it to hold its own against the little *Gazette*, dropped at Besançon by the great *Gazette*, and the *Patriot*, which frisked in the hands of the Republicans. Paris sent them a young man, knowing nothing about la Franche Comté, who began by writing them a leading article of the school of the *Charivari*. The chief of the moderate party, a member of the municipal council, sent for the journalist and said to him, 'You must understand, Monsieur, that we are serious, more than serious—tiresome; we resent being amused, and are furious at having been made to laugh. Be as hard of digestion as the toughest disquisitions in

the Revue des Deux Mondes, and you will hardly reach the level of Besançon.'

The editor took the hint, and thenceforth spoke the most incomprehensible philosophical lingo. His success was complete.

If young Monsieur de Soulas did not fall in the esteem of Besançon society, it was out of pure vanity on its part; the aristocracy were happy to affect a modern air, and to be able to show any Parisians of rank who visited the Comte a young man who bore some likeness to them.

All this hidden labour, all this dust thrown in people's eyes, this display of folly and latent prudence, had an object, or the *lion* of Besançon would have been no son of the soil. Amédée wanted to achieve a good marriage by proving some day that his farms were not mortgaged, and that he had some savings. He wanted to be the talk of the town, to be the finest and best-dressed man there, in order to win first the attention, and then the hand, of Mademoiselle Rosalie de Watteville.

In 1830, at the time when young Monsieur de Soulas was setting up in business as a dandy, Rosalie was but fourteen. Hence, in 1834, Mademoiselle de Watteville had reached the age when young persons are easily struck by the peculiarities which attracted the attention of the town to Amédée. There are many *lions* who become *lions* out of self-interest and speculation. The Wattevilles, who for twelve years had been drawing an income of fifty thousand francs, did not spend more than four-and-twenty thousand francs a year, while receiving all the upper circle of Besançon every Monday and Friday. On Monday they gave a dinner, on Fridays evening party. Thus, in twelve years, what a sum must have accumulated from twenty-six thousand francs a year, saved and invested with the judgment that distinguishes those old families! It was very generally supposed that Madame de Watteville, thinking she had

land enough, had placed her savings in the three per cents., in 1830. Rosalie's dowry would therefore, as the best informed opined, amount to about twenty thousand francs a year. So for the last five years Amédée had worked like a mole to get into the highest favour of the severe Baroness, while laying himself out to flatter Mademoiselle de Watteville's conceit.

Madame de Watteville was in the secret of the devices by which Amédée succeeded in keeping up his rank in Besançon, and esteemed him highly for it. Soulas had placed himself under her wing when she was thirty, and at that time had dared to admire her and make her his idol; he had got so far as to be allowed—he alone in the world—to pour out to her all the unseemly gossip which almost all very precise women love to hear, being authorised by their superior virtue to look into the gulf without falling, and into the devil's snares without being caught. Do you understand why the lion did not allow himself the very smallest intrigue? He lived a public life, in the street so to speak, on purpose to play the part of a lover sacrificed to duty by the Baroness, and to feast her mind with the sins she had forbidden to her senses. A man who is so privileged as to be allowed to pour light stories into the ear of a bigot is in her eyes a charming man. If this exemplary youth had better known the human heart, he might without risk have allowed himself some flirtations among the grisettes of Besançon who looked up to him as a king; his affairs might perhaps have been all the more hopeful with the strict and prudish Baroness. To Rosalie our Cato affected prodigality; he professed a life of elegance, showing her in perspective the splendid part played by a woman of fashion in Paris, whither he meant to go as Deputé.

All these manœuvres were crowned with complete success. In 1834 the mothers of the forty noble families composing the high society of Besançon quoted Monsieur

Amédée de Soulas as the most charming young man in the town ; no one would have dared to dispute his place as cock of the walk at the Hôtel de Rupt, and all Besançon regarded him as Rosalie de Watteville's future husband. There had even been some exchange of ideas on the subject between the Baroness and Amédée, to which the Baron's apparent nonentity gave some certainty.

Mademoiselle de Watteville, to whom her enormous prospective fortune at that time lent considerable importance, had been brought up exclusively within the precincts of the Hôtel de Rupt—which her mother rarely quitted, so devoted was she to her dear Archbishop —and severely repressed by an exclusively religious education, and by her mother's despotism, which held her rigidly to principles. Rosalie knew absolutely nothing. Is it knowledge to have learned geography from Guthrie, sacred history, ancient history, the history of France, and the four rules, all passed through the sieve of an old Jesuit? Dancing and music were forbidden, as being more likely to corrupt life than to grace it. The Baroness taught her daughter every conceivable stitch in tapestry and women's work—plain sewing, embroidery, netting. At seventeen Rosalie had never read anything but the *Lettres édifiantes*, and some works on heraldry. No newspaper had ever defiled her sight. She attended mass at the Cathedral every morning, taken there by her mother, came back to breakfast, did needlework after a little walk in the garden, and received visitors, sitting with the Baroness until dinner-time. Then, after dinner, excepting on Mondays and Fridays, she accompanied Madame de Watteville to other houses to spend the evening, without being allowed to talk more than the maternal rule permitted.

At eighteen Mademoiselle de Watteville was a slight, thin girl with a flat figure, fair, colourless, and insigni-

ficant to the last degree. Her eyes, of a very light blue, borrowed beauty from their lashes, which, when downcast, threw a shadow on her cheeks. A few freckles marred the whiteness of her forehead, which was shapely enough. Her face was exactly like those of Albert Dürer's saints, or those of the painters before Perugino; the same plump, though slender modelling, the same delicacy saddened by ecstasy, the same severe guilelessness. Everything about her, even to her attitude, was suggestive of those virgins, whose beauty is only revealed in its mystical radiance to the eyes of the studious connoisseur. She had fine hands though red, and a pretty foot, the foot of an aristocrat.

She habitually wore simple checked cotton dresses; but on Sundays and in the evening her mother allowed her silk. The cut of her frocks, made at Besançon, almost made her ugly, while her mother tried to borrow grace, beauty, and elegance from Paris fashions; for through Monsieur de Soulas she procured the smallest trifles of her dress from thence. Rosalie had never worn a pair of silk stockings or thin boots, but always cotton stockings and leather shoes. On high days she was dressed in a muslin frock, her hair plainly dressed, and had bronze kid shoes.

This education, and her own modest demeanour, hid in Rosalie a spirit of iron. Physiologists and profound observers will tell you, perhaps to your great astonishment, that tempers, characteristics, wit, or genius reappear in families at long intervals, precisely like what are known as hereditary diseases. Thus talent, like the gout, sometimes skips over two generations. We have an illustrious example of this phenomenon in George Sand, in whom are resuscitated the force, the power, and the imaginative faculty of the Maréchal de Saxe, whose natural grand-daughter she is.

The decisive character and romantic daring of the famous Watteville had reappeared in the soul of his

grand-niece, reinforced by the tenacity and pride of blood of the Rupts. But these qualities—or faults, if you will have it so—were as deeply buried in this young girlish soul, apparently so weak and yielding, as the seething lavas within a hill before it becomes a volcano. Madame de Watteville alone, perhaps, suspected this inheritance from two strains. She was so severe to her Rosalie, that she replied one day to the Archbishop, who blamed her for being too hard on the child, 'Leave me to manage her, Monseigneur. I know her! She has more than one Beelzebub in her skin!'

The Baroness kept all the keener watch over her daughter, because she considered her honour as a mother to be at stake. After all, she had nothing else to do. Clotilde de Rupt, at this time five-and-thirty, and as good as widowed, with a husband who turned egg-cups in every variety of wood, who set his mind on making wheels with six spokes out of iron-wood, and manufactured snuff-boxes for every one of his acquaintance, flirted in strict propriety with Amédée de Soulas. When this young man was in the house, she alternately dismissed and recalled her daughter, and tried to detect symptoms of jealousy in that youthful soul, so as to have occasion to repress them. She imitated the police in its dealings with the republicans; but she laboured in vain. Rosalie showed no symptoms of rebellion. Then the arid bigot accused her daughter of perfect insensibility. Rosalie knew her mother well enough to be sure that if she had thought young Monsieur de Soulas *nice*, she would have drawn down on herself a smart reproof. Thus, to all her mother's incitement she replied merely by such phrases as are wrongly called Jesuitical—wrongly, because the Jesuits were strong, and such reservations are the *chevaux de frise* behind which weakness takes refuge. Then the mother regarded the girl as a dissembler. If by mischance a spark of the true nature of the Wattevilles and the Rupts blazed out, the mother armed herself with

the respect due from children to their parents to reduce Rosalie to passive obedience.

This covert battle was carried on in the most secret seclusion of domestic life, with closed doors. The Vicar-General, the dear Abbé Grancey, the friend of the late Archbishop, clever as he was in his capacity of the chief Father Confessor of the diocese, could not discover whether the struggle had stirred up some hatred between the mother and daughter, whether the mother were jealous in anticipation, or whether the court Amédée was paying to the girl through her mother had not overstepped its due limits. Being a friend of the family, neither mother nor daughter confessed to him. Rosalie, a little too much harried, morally, about young de Soulas, could not abide him, to use a homely phrase, and when he spoke to her, trying to take her heart by surprise, she received him but coldly. This aversion, discerned only by her mother's eye, was a constant subject of admonition.

'Rosalie, I cannot imagine why you affect such coldness towards Amédée. Is it because he is a friend of the family, and because we like him—your father and I?'

'Well, mamma,' replied the poor child one day, 'if I made him welcome, should I not be still more in the wrong?'

'What do you mean by that?' cried Madame de Watteville. 'What is the meaning of such words? Your mother is unjust, no doubt, and, according to you, would be so in any case! Never let such an answer pass your lips again to your mother——' and so forth.

This quarrel lasted three hours and three-quarters. Rosalie noted the time. Her mother, pale with fury, sent her to her room, where Rosalie pondered on the meaning of this scene without discovering it, so guileless was she. Thus young Monsieur de Soulas, who was supposed by every one to be very near the end he was

aiming at, all neckcloths set, and by dint of pots of patent blacking—an end which required so much waxing of his moustaches, so many smart waistcoats, wore out so many horseshoes and stays—for he wore a leather vest, the stays of the *lion*—Amédée, I say, was further away than any chance comer, although he had on his side the worthy and noble Abbé de Grancey.

'Madame,' said Monsieur de Soulas, addressing the Baroness, while waiting till his soup was cool enough to swallow, and affecting to give a romantic turn to his narrative, 'one fine morning the mail-coach dropped at the Hôtel National a gentleman from Paris, who, after seeking apartments, made up his mind in favour of the first floor in Mademoiselle Galard's house, Rue du Perron. Then the stranger went straight to the Mairie, and had himself registered as a resident with all political qualifications. Finally, he had his name entered on the list of barristers to the Court, showing his title in due form, and he left his card on all his new colleagues, the Ministerial officials, the Councillors of the Court, and the members of the bench, with the name, "ALBERT SAVARON."'

'The name of Savaron is famous,' said Mademoiselle de Watteville, who was strong in heraldic information. 'The Savarons of Savarus are one of the oldest, noblest, and richest families in Belgium.'

'He is a Frenchman, and no man's son,' replied Amédée de Soulas. 'If he wishes to bear the arms of the Savarons of Savarus, he must add a bar-sinister. There is no one left of the Brabant family but a Mademoiselle de Savarus, a rich heiress, and unmarried.'

'The bar-sinister is, of course, the badge of a bastard; but the bastard of a Comte de Savarus is noble,' answered Rosalie.

'Enough, that will do, Mademoiselle!' said the Baroness.

'You insisted on her learning heraldry,' said Monsieur de Watteville, 'and she knows it very well.'

'Go on, I beg, Monsieur de Soulas.'

'You may suppose that in a town where everything is classified, known, pigeon-holed, ticketed, and numbered, as in Besançon, Albert Savaron was received without hesitation by the lawyers of the town. They were satisfied to say, "Here is a man who does not know his Besançon. Who the devil can have sent him here? What can he hope to do? Sending his card to the Judges instead of calling in person! What a blunder!" And so, three days after, Savaron had ceased to exist. He took as his servant old Monsieur Galard's man—Galard being dead—Jérôme, who can cook a little. Albert Savaron was all the more completely forgotten, because no one had seen him or met him anywhere.'

'Then, does he not go to mass?' asked Madame de Chavoncourt.

'He goes on Sundays to Saint-Pierre, but to the early service at eight in the morning. He rises every night between one and two in the morning, works till eight, has his breakfast, and then goes on working. He walks in his garden, going round fifty, or perhaps sixty times; then he goes in, dines, and goes to bed between six and seven.'

'How did you learn all that?' Madame de Chavoncourt asked Monsieur de Soulas.

'In the first place, Madame, I live in the Rue Neuve, at the corner of the Rue du Perron; I look out on the house where this mysterious personage lodges; then, of course, there are communications between my tiger and Jérôme.'

'And you gossip with Babylas?'

'What would you have me do out riding?'

'Well—and how was it that you engaged a stranger for your defence?' asked the Baroness, thus placing the conversation in the hands of the Vicar-General.

'The President of the Court played this pleader a trick by appointing him to defend at the Assizes a half-witted peasant accused of forgery. But Monsieur Savaron procured the poor man's acquittal by proving his innocence and showing that he had been a tool in the hands of the real culprits. Not only did his line of defence succeed, but it led to the arrest of two of the witnesses, who were proved guilty and condemned. His speech struck the Court and the jury. One of these, a merchant, placed a difficult case next day in the hands of Monsieur Savaron, and he won it. In the position in which we found ourselves, Monsieur Berryer finding it impossible to come to Besançon, Monsieur de Garcenault advised him to employ this Monsieur Albert Savaron, foretelling our success. As soon as I saw him and heard him, I felt faith in him, and I was not wrong.'

'Is he then so extraordinary?' asked Madame de Chavoncourt.

'Certainly, Madame,' replied the Vicar-General.

'Well, tell us about it,' said Madame de Watteville.

'The first time I saw him,' said the Abbé de Grancey, 'he received me in his outer room next the ante-room—old Galard's drawing-room—which he has had painted like old oak, and which I found to be entirely lined with law-books, arranged on shelves also painted as old oak. The painting and the books are the sole decoration of the room, for the furniture consists of an old writing-table of carved wood, six old armchairs covered with tapestry, window curtains of grey stuff bordered with green, and a green carpet over the floor. The ante-room stove heats this library as well. As I waited there I did not picture my advocate as a young man. But this singular setting is in perfect harmony with his person; for Monsieur Savaron came out in a black merino dressing-gown tied with a red cord, red slippers, a red flannel waistcoat, and a red smoking-cap.'

'The devil's colours!' exclaimed Madame de Watteville.

'Yes,' said the Abbé; 'but a magnificent head. Black hair already streaked with a little grey, hair like that of Saint Peter and Saint Paul in pictures, with thick shining curls, hair as stiff as horse-hair; a round white throat like a woman's; a splendid forehead, furrowed by the strong median line which great schemes, great thoughts, deep meditations stamp on a great man's brow; an olive complexion marbled with red, a square nose, eyes of flame, hollow cheeks, with two long lines betraying much suffering, a mouth with a sardonic smile, and a small chin, narrow, and too short; crows' feet on his temples; deep-set eyes, moving in their sockets like burning balls; but, in spite of all these indications of a violently passionate nature, his manner was calm, deeply resigned, and his voice of penetrating sweetness, which surprised me in Court by its easy flow; a true orator's voice, now clear and appealing, sometimes insinuating, but a voice of thunder when needful, and lending itself to sarcasm to become incisive.

'Monsieur Albert Savaron is of middle height, neither stout nor thin. And his hands are those of a prelate.

'The second time I called on him he received me in his bedroom, adjoining the library, and smiled at my astonishment when I saw there a wretched chest of drawers, a shabby carpet, a camp-bed, and cotton window-curtains. He came out of his private room, to which no one is admitted, as Jérôme informed me; the man did not go in, but merely knocked at the door.

'The third time he was breakfasting in his library on the most frugal fare; but on this occasion, as he had spent the night studying our documents, as I had my attorney with me, and as that worthy Monsieur Girardet is long-winded, I had leisure to study the stranger. He certainly is no ordinary man. There is more than one secret behind that face, at once so terrible and so gentle, patient and yet impatient, broad and yet hollow. I saw,

too, that he stooped a little, like all men who have some heavy burden to bear.'

'Why did so eloquent a man leave Paris? For what purpose did he come to Besançon?' asked pretty Madame de Chavoncourt. 'Could no one tell him how little chance a stranger has of succeeding here? The good folks of Besançon will make use of him, but they will not allow him to make use of them. Why, having come, did he make so little effort that it needed a freak of the President's to bring him forward?'

'After carefully studying that fine head,' said the Abbé, looking keenly at the lady who had interrupted him, in such a way as to suggest that there was something he would not tell, 'and especially after hearing him this morning reply to one of the bigwigs of the Paris Bar, I believe that this man, who may be five-and-thirty, will by and by make a great sensation.'

'Why should we discuss him? You have gained your action, and paid him,' said Madame de Watteville, watching her daughter, who, all the time the Vicar-General had been speaking, seemed to hang on his lips.

The conversation changed, and no more was heard of Albert Savaron.

The portrait sketched by the cleverest of the Vicars-General of the diocese had all the greater charm for Rosalie because there was a romance behind it. For the first time in her life she had come across the marvellous, the exceptional, which smiles on every youthful imagination, and which curiosity, so eager at Rosalie's age, goes forth to meet half-way. What an ideal being was this Albert—gloomy, unhappy, eloquent, laborious, as compared by Mademoiselle de Watteville to that chubby fat Count, bursting with health, paying compliments, and talking of the fashions in the very face of the splendour of the old Counts of Rupt. Amédée had cost her many quarrels and scoldings, and, indeed, she knew

him only too well; while this Albert Savaron offered many enigmas to be solved.

'Albert Savaron de Savarus,' she repeated to herself.

Now, to see him, to catch sight of him! This was the desire of the girl to whom desire was hitherto unknown. She pondered in her heart, in her fancy, in her brain, the least phrases used by the Abbé de Grancey, for all his words had told.

'A fine forehead!' said she to herself, looking at the head of every man seated at the table; 'I do not see one fine one.—Monsieur de Soulas' is too prominent; Monsieur de Grancey's is fine, but he is seventy, and has no hair, it is impossible to see where his forehead ends.'

'What is the matter, Rosalie; you are eating nothing?'

'I am not hungry, mamma,' said she. 'A prelate's hands——' she went on to herself. 'I cannot remember our handsome Archbishop's hands, though he confirmed me.'

Finally, in the midst of her coming and going in the labyrinth of her meditations, she remembered a lighted window she had seen from her bed, gleaming through the trees of the two adjoining gardens, when she had happened to wake in the night. . . . 'Then that was his light!' thought she. 'I might see him!—I will see him.'

'Monsieur de Grancey, is the Chapter's lawsuit quite settled?' said Rosalie point-blank to the Vicar-General, during a moment of silence.

Madame de Watteville exchanged rapid glances with the Vicar-General.

'What can that matter to you, my dear child?' she said to Rosalie, with an affected sweetness which made her daughter cautious for the rest of her days.

'It might be carried to the Court of Appeal, but our adversaries will think twice about that,' replied the Abbé.

'I never could have believed that Rosalie would think

about a lawsuit all through a dinner,' remarked Madame de Watteville.

'Nor I either,' said Rosalie, in a dreamy way that made every one laugh. 'But Monsieur de Grancey was so full of it, that I was interested.'

The company rose from table and returned to the drawing-room. All through the evening Rosalie listened in case Albert Savaron should be mentioned again; but beyond the congratulations offered by each new-comer to the Abbé on having gained his suit, to which no one added any praise of the advocate, no more was said about it. Mademoiselle de Watteville impatiently looked forward to bedtime. She had promised herself to wake at between two and three in the morning, and to look at Albert's dressing-room windows. When the hour came, she felt almost pleasure in gazing at the glimmer from the lawyer's candles that shone through the trees, now almost bare of their leaves. By the help of the strong sight of a young girl, which curiosity seems to make longer, she saw Albert writing, and fancied she could distinguish the colour of the furniture, which she thought was red. From the chimney above the roof rose a thick column of smoke.

'While all the world is sleeping, he is awake—like God!' thought she.

The education of girls brings with it such serious problems—for the future of a nation is in the mother—that the University of France long since set itself the task of having nothing to do with it. Here is one of these problems: Ought girls to be informed on all points? Ought their minds to be under restraint? It need not be said that the religious system is one of restraint. If you enlighten them, you make them demons before their time; if you keep them from thinking, you end in the sudden explosion so well shown by Molière in the character of Agnès, and you leave this suppressed mind, so fresh and clear-seeing, as swift and as logical as that of a savage, at the mercy

of an accident. This inevitable crisis was brought on in Mademoiselle de Watteville by the portrait which one of the most prudent Abbés of the Chapter of Besançon imprudently allowed himself to sketch at a dinner party.

Next morning, Mademoiselle de Watteville, while dressing, necessarily looked out at Albert Savaron walking in the garden adjoining that of the Hôtel de Rupt.

'What would have become of me,' thought she, 'if he had lived anywhere else? Here I can, at any rate, see him.—What is he thinking about?'

Having seen this extraordinary man, though at a distance, the only man whose countenance stood forth in contrast with crowds of Besançon faces she had hitherto met with, Rosalie at once jumped at the idea of getting into his home, of ascertaining the reasons of so much mystery, of hearing that eloquent voice, of winning a glance from those fine eyes. All this she set her heart on, but how could she achieve it?

All that day she drew her needle through her embroidery with the obtuse concentration of a girl who, like Agnès, seems to be thinking of nothing, but who is reflecting on things in general so deeply, that her artifice is unfailing. As a result of this profound meditation, Rosalie thought she would go to confession. Next morning, after mass, she had a brief interview with the Abbé Giroud at Saint-Pierre, and managed so ingeniously that the hour for her confession was fixed for Sunday morning at half-past seven, before the eight o'clock Mass. She committed herself to a dozen fibs in order to find herself, just for once, in the church at the hour when the lawyer came to Mass. Then she was seized with an impulse of extreme affection for her father; she went to see him in his workroom, and asked him for all sorts of information on the art of turning, ending by advising him to turn larger pieces, columns. After persuading her father to set to work on some twisted pillars, one of the difficulties of the turner's art, she suggested that he

should make use of a large heap of stones that lay in the middle of the garden to construct a sort of grotto on which he might erect a little temple or Belvedere in which his twisted pillars could be used and shown off to all the world.

At the climax of the pleasure the poor unoccupied man derived from this scheme, Rosalie said, as she kissed him, 'Above all, do not tell mamma who gave you the notion; she would scold me.'

'Do not be afraid!' replied Monsieur de Watteville, who groaned as bitterly as his daughter under the tyranny of the terrible descendant of the Rupts.

So Rosalie had a certain prospect of seeing ere long a charming observatory built, whence her eye would command the lawyer's private room. And there are men for whose sake young girls can carry out such master-strokes of diplomacy, while, for the most part, like Albert Savaron, they know it not.

The Sunday so impatiently looked for arrived, and Rosalie dressed with such carefulness as made Mariette, the ladies'-maid, smile.

'It is the first time I ever knew Mademoiselle to be so fidgety,' said Mariette.

'It strikes me,' said Rosalie, with a glance at Mariette, which brought poppies to her cheeks, 'that you too are more particular on some days than on others.'

As she went down the steps, across the courtyard, and through the gates, Rosalie's heart beat, as everybody's does in anticipation of a great event. Hitherto, she had never known what it was to walk in the streets; for a moment she had felt as though her mother must read her schemes on her brow, and forbid her going to confession, and she now felt new blood in her feet, she lifted them as though she trod on fire. She had, of course, arranged to be with her confessor at a quarter-past eight, telling her mother eight, so as to have about a quarter of an hour near Albert. She got to church before Mass,

and after a short prayer, went to see if the Abbé Giroud were in his confessional, simply to pass the time; and she thus placed herself in such a way as to see Albert as he came into church.

The man must have been atrociously ugly who did not seem handsome to Mademoiselle de Watteville in the frame of mind produced by her curiosity. And Albert Savaron, who was really very striking, made all the more impression on Rosalie because his mien, his walk, his carriage, everything down to his clothing, had the indescribable stamp which can only be expressed by the word Mystery.

He came in. The church, till now gloomy, seemed to Rosalie to be illuminated. The girl was fascinated by his slow and solemn demeanour, as of a man who bears a world on his shoulders, and whose deep gaze, whose very gestures, combine to express a devastating or absorbing thought. Rosalie now understood the Vicar-General's words in their fullest extent. Yes, those eyes of tawny brown, shot with golden lights, covered an ardour which revealed itself in sudden flashes. Rosalie, with a recklessness which Mariette noted, stood in the lawyer's way, so as to exchange glances with him; and this glance turned her blood, for it seethed and boiled as though its warmth were doubled.

As soon as Albert had taken a seat, Mademoiselle de Watteville quickly found a place whence she could see him perfectly during all the time the Abbé might leave her. When Mariette said, 'Here is Monsieur Giroud,' it seemed to Rosalie that the interval had lasted no more than a few minutes. By the time she came out from the confessional, Mass was over. Albert had left the church.

'The Vicar-General was right,' thought she. '*He* is unhappy. Why should this eagle—for he has the eyes of an eagle—swoop down on Besançon? Oh, I must know everything! But how?'

Under the smart of this new desire Rosalie set the stitches of her worsted-work with exquisite precision, and hid her meditations under a little innocent air, which shammed simplicity to deceive Madame de Watteville.

From that Sunday, when Mademoiselle de Watteville had met that look, or, if you please, received this baptism of fire—a fine expression of Napoleon's which may be well applied to love—she eagerly promoted the plan for the Belvedere.

'Mamma,' said she one day when two columns were turned, 'my father has taken a singular idea into his head; he is turning columns for a Belvedere he intends to erect on the heap of stones in the middle of the garden. Do you approve of it? It seems to me——'

'I approve of everything your father does,' said Madame de Watteville drily, 'and it is a wife's duty to submit to her husband even if she does not approve of his ideas. Why should I object to a thing which is of no importance in itself, if only it amuses Monsieur de Watteville?'

'Well, because from thence we shall see into Monsieur de Soulas' rooms, and Monsieur de Soulas will see us when we are there. Perhaps remarks may be made——'

'Do you presume, Rosalie, to guide your parents, and think you know more than they do of life and the proprieties?'

'I say no more, mamma. Besides, my father said that there would be a room in the grotto, where it would be cool, and where we can take coffee.'

'Your father has had an excellent idea,' said Madame de Watteville, who forthwith went to look at the columns.

She gave her entire approbation to the Baron de Watteville's design, while choosing for the erection of this monument a spot at the bottom of the garden, which could not be seen from Monsieur de Soulas' windows,

but whence they could perfectly see into Albert Savaron's rooms. A builder was sent for, who undertook to construct a grotto, of which the top should be reached by a path three feet wide through the rock-work, where periwinkles would grow, iris, clematis, ivy, honeysuckle, and Virginia creeper. The Baroness desired that the inside should be lined with rustic woodwork, such as was then the fashion for flower-stands, with a looking-glass against the wall, an ottoman forming a box, and a table of inlaid bark. Monsieur de Soulas proposed that the floor should be of asphalte. Rosalie suggested a hanging chandelier of rustic wood.

'The Wattevilles are having something charming done in their garden,' was rumoured in Besançon.

'They are rich, and can afford a thousand crowns for a whim——'

'A thousand crowns!' exclaimed Madame de Chavoncourt.

'Yes, a thousand crowns,' cried young Monsieur de Soulas. 'A man has been sent for from Paris to rusticate the interior, but it will be very pretty. Monsieur de Watteville himself is making the chandelier, and has begun to carve the wood.'

'Berquet is to make a cellar under it,' said an Abbé.

'No,' replied young Monsieur de Soulas, 'he is raising the kiosk on a concrete foundation, that it may not be damp.'

'You know the very least things that are done in that house,' said Madame de Chavoncourt sourly, as she looked at one of her great girls waiting to be married for a year past.

Mademoiselle de Watteville, with a little flush of pride in thinking of the success of her Belvedere, discerned in herself a vast superiority over every one about her. No one guessed that a little girl, supposed to be a witless goose, had simply made up her mind to get a closer view of the lawyer Savaron's private study.

Albert Savaron's brilliant defence of the Cathedral Chapter was all the sooner forgotten because the envy of other lawyers was aroused. Also, Savaron, faithful to his seclusion, went nowhere. Having no friends to cry him up, and seeing no one, he increased the chances of being forgotten which are common to strangers in such a town as Besançon. Nevertheless, he pleaded three times at the Commercial Tribunal in three knotty cases which had to be carried to the superior Court. He thus gained as clients four of the chief merchants of the place, who discerned in him so much good sense and sound legal purview that they placed their claims in his hands.

On the day when the Watteville family inaugurated the Belvedere, Savaron also was founding a monument. Thanks to the connections he had obscurely formed among the upper class of merchants in Besançon, he was starting a fortnightly paper, called the *Eastern Review*, with the help of forty shares of five hundred francs each, taken up by his ten first clients, on whom he had impressed the necessity for promoting the interests of Besançon, the town where the traffic should meet between Mulhouse and Lyons, and the chief centre between Mulhouse and the Rhone.

To compete with Strasbourg, was it not needful that Besançon should become a focus of enlightenment as well as of trade? The leading questions relating to the interests of Eastern France could only be dealt with in a review. What a glorious task to rob Strasbourg and Dijon of their literary importance, to bring light to the East of France, and compete with the centralising influence of Paris! These reflections, put forward by Albert, were repeated by the ten merchants, who believed them to be their own.

Monsieur Savaron did not commit the blunder of putting his name in front; he left the finances of the concern to his chief client, Monsieur Boucher, con-

nected by marriage with one of the great publishers of important ecclesiastical works; but he kept the editorship, with a share of the profits as founder. The commercial interest appealed to Dôle, to Dijon, to Salins, to Neufchâtel, to the Jura, Bourg, Nantua, Lous-le-Saulnier. The concurrence was invited of the learning and energy of every scientific student in the districts of le Bugey, la Bresse, and Franche Comté. By the influence of commercial interests and common feeling, five hundred subscribers were booked in consideration of the low price: the *Review* cost eight francs a quarter.

To avoid hurting the conceit of the provincials by refusing their articles, the lawyer hit on the good idea of suggesting a desire for the literary management of this *Review* to Monsieur Boucher's eldest son, a young man of two-and-twenty, very eager for fame, to whom the snares and woes of literary responsibilities were utterly unknown. Albert quietly kept the upper hand, and made Alfred Boucher his devoted adherent. Alfred was the only man in Besançon with whom the king of the bar was on familiar terms. Alfred came in the morning to discuss the articles for the next number with Albert in the garden. It is needless to say that the trial number contained a 'Meditation' by Alfred, which Savaron approved. In his conversations with Alfred, Albert would let drop some great ideas, subjects for articles of which Alfred availed himself. And thus the merchant's son fancied he was making capital out of the great man. To Alfred, Albert was a man of genius, of profound politics. The commercial world, enchanted at the success of the *Review*, had to pay up only three-tenths of their shares. Two hundred more subscribers, and the periodical would pay a dividend to the shareholders of five per cent., the editor remaining unpaid. This editing, indeed, was beyond price.

After the third number the *Review* was recognised for exchange by all the papers published in France, which

Albert henceforth read at home. This third number included a tale signed 'A. S.,' and attributed to the famous lawyer. In spite of the small attention paid by the higher circle of Besançon to the *Review*, which was accused of Liberal views, this, the first novel produced in the county, came under discussion that mid-winter at Madame de Chavoncourt's.

'Papa,' said Rosalie, 'a *Review* is published in Besançon; you ought to take it in; and keep it in your room, for mamma would not let me read it, but you will lend it to me.'

Monsieur de Watteville, eager to obey his dear Rosalie, who for the last five months had given him so many proofs of filial affection,—Monsieur de Watteville went in person to subscribe for a year to the *Eastern Review*, and lent the four numbers already out to his daughter. In the course of the night Rosalie devoured the tale—the first she had ever read in her life—but she had only known life for two months past. Hence the effect produced on her by this work must not be judged by ordinary rules. Without prejudice of any kind as to the greater or less merit of this composition from the pen of a Parisian who had thus imported into the province the manner, the brilliancy, if you will, of the new literary school, it could not fail to be a masterpiece to a young girl abandoning all her intelligence and her innocent heart to her first reading of this kind.

Also, from what she had heard said, Rosalie had by intuition conceived a notion of it which strangely enhanced the interest of this novel. She hoped to find in it the sentiments, and perhaps something of the life of Albert. From the first pages this opinion took so strong a hold on her, that after reading the fragment to the end she was certain that it was no mistake. Here, then, is this confession, in which, according to the critics of Madame de Chavoncourt's drawing-room, Albert had imitated some modern writers who, for lack of inventive-

ness, relate their private joys, their private griefs, or the mysterious events of their own life.

AMBITION FOR LOVE'S SAKE

In 1823 two young men, having agreed as a plan for a holiday to make a tour through Switzerland, set out from Lucerne one fine morning in the month of July in a boat pulled by three oarsmen. They started for Fluelen, intending to stop at every notable spot on the lake of the Four Cantons. The views which shut in the waters on the way from Lucerne to Fluelen offer every combination that the most exacting fancy can demand of mountains and rivers, lakes and rocks, brooks and pastures, trees and torrents. Here are austere solitudes and charming headlands, smiling and trimly kept meadows, forests crowning perpendicular granite cliffs like plumes, deserted but verdant reaches opening out, and valleys whose beauty seems the lovelier in the dreamy distance.

As they passed the pretty hamlet of Gersau, one of the friends looked for a long time at a wooden house which seemed to have been recently built, enclosed by a paling, and standing on a promontory, almost bathed by the waters. As the boat rowed past, a woman's head was raised against the background of the room on the upper story of this house, to admire the effect of the boat on the lake. One of the young men met the glance thus indifferently given by the unknown fair.

'Let us stop here,' said he to his friend. 'We meant to make Lucerne our head-quarters for seeing Switzerland; you will not take it amiss, Léopold, if I change my mind and stay here to take charge of our possessions. Then you can go where you please; my journey is ended. Pull to land, men, and put us out at this village; we will breakfast here. I will go back to Lucerne to fetch all our luggage, and before you leave you will

know in which house I take a lodging, where you will find me on your return.'

'Here or at Lucerne,' replied Léopold, 'the difference is not so great that I need hinder you from following your whim.'

These two youths were friends in the truest sense of the word. They were of the same age; they had learned at the same school; and after studying the law, they were spending their holiday in the classical tour in Switzerland. Léopold, by his father's determination, was already pledged to a place in a notary's office in Paris. His spirit of rectitude, his gentleness, and the coolness of his senses and his brain, guaranteed him to be a docile pupil. Léopold could see himself a notary in Paris: his life lay before him like one of the high roads that cross the plains of France, and he looked along its whole length with philosophical resignation.

The character of his companion, whom we will call Rodolphe, presented a strong contrast with Léopold's, and their antagonism had no doubt had the result of tightening the bond that united them. Rodolphe was the natural son of a man of rank, who was carried off by a premature death before he could make any arrangements for securing the means of existence to a woman he fondly loved and to Rodolphe. Thus cheated by a stroke of fate, Rodolphe's mother had recourse to a heroic measure. She sold everything she owed to the munificence of her child's father for a sum of more than a hundred thousand francs, bought with it a life annuity for herself at a high rate, and thus acquired an income of about fifteen thousand francs, resolving to devote the whole of it to the education of her son, so as to give him all the personal advantages that might help to make his fortune, while saving, by strict economy, a small capital to be his when he came of age. It was bold; it was counting on her own life; but without this boldness the good mother would certainly have found it impossible to

live and to bring her child up suitably, and he was her only hope, her future, the spring of all her joys.

Rodolphe, the son of a most charming Parisian woman, and a man of mark, a nobleman of Brabant, was cursed with extreme sensitiveness. From his infancy he had in everything shown a most ardent nature. In him mere desire became a guiding force and the motive power of his whole being, the stimulus to his imagination, the reason of his actions. Notwithstanding the pains taken by a clever mother, who was alarmed when she detected this predisposition, Rodolphe wished for things as a poet imagines, as a mathematician calculates, as a painter sketches, as a musician creates melodies. Tender-hearted, like his mother, he dashed with inconceivable violence and impetus of thought after the object of his desires; he annihilated time. While dreaming of the fulfilment of his schemes, he always overlooked the means of attainment. 'When my son has children,' said his mother, 'he will want them born grown up.'

This fine frenzy, carefully directed, enabled Rodolphe to achieve his studies with brilliant results, and to become what the English call an accomplished gentleman. His mother was then proud of him, though still fearing a catastrophe if ever a passion should possess a heart at once so tender and so susceptible, so vehement and so kind. Therefore, the judicious mother had encouraged the friendship which bound Léopold to Rodolphe and Rodolphe to Léopold, since she saw in the cold and faithful young notary a guardian, a comrade, who might to a certain extent take her place if by some misfortune she should be lost to her son. Rodolphe's mother, still handsome at three-and-forty, had inspired Léopold with an ardent passion. This circumstance made the two young men even more intimate.

So Léopold, knowing Rodolphe well, was not surprised to find him stopping at a village and giving up the

projected journey to Saint-Gothard, on the strength of a single glance at the upper window of a house. While breakfast was prepared for them at the Swan Inn, the friends walked round the hamlet and came to the neighbourhood of the pretty new house; here, while gazing about him and talking to the inhabitants, Rodolphe discovered the residence of some decent folk, who were willing to take him as a boarder, a very frequent custom in Switzerland. They offered him a bedroom looking over the lake and the mountains, and from whence he had a view of one of those immense sweeping reaches which, in this lake, are the admiration of every traveller. This house was divided by a roadway and a little creek from the new house, where Rodolphe had caught sight of the unknown fair one's face.

For a hundred francs a month Rodolphe was relieved of all thought for the necessaries of life. But, in consideration of the outlay the Stopfer couple expected to make, they bargained for three months' residence and a month's payment in advance. Rub a Swiss never so little, and you find the usurer. After breakfast, Rodolphe at once made himself at home by depositing in his room such property as he had brought with him for the journey to the Saint-Gothard, and he watched Léopold as he set out, moved by the spirit of routine, to carry out the excursion for himself and his friend. When Rodolphe, sitting on a fallen rock on the shore, could no longer see Léopold's boat, he turned to examine the new house with stolen glances, hoping to see the fair unknown. Alas! he went in without its having given a sign of life. During dinner, in the company of Monsieur and Madame Stopfer, retired coopers from Neufchâtel, he questioned them as to the neighbourhood, and ended by learning all he wanted to know about the lady, thanks to his hosts' loquacity; for they were ready to pour out their budget of gossip without any pressing.

The fair stranger's name was Fanny Lovelace. This

name (pronounced *Loveless*) is that of an old English family, but Richardson has given it to a creation whose fame eclipses all others! Miss Lovelace had come to settle by the lake for her father's health, the physicians having recommended him the air of Lucerne. These two English people had arrived with no other servant than a little girl of fourteen, a dumb child, much attached to Miss Fanny, on whom she waited very intelligently, and had settled, two winters since, with Monsieur and Madame Bergmann, the retired head-gardeners of His Excellency Count Borromeo of Isola Bella and Isola Madre in the Lago Maggiore. These Swiss, who were possessed of an income of about a thousand crowns a year, had let the top story of their house to the Lovelaces for three years, at a rent of two hundred francs a year. Old Lovelace, a man of ninety, and much broken, was too poor to allow himself any gratifications, and very rarely went out; his daughter worked to maintain him, translating English books, and writing some herself, it was said. The Lovelaces could not afford to hire boats to row on the lake, or horses and guides to explore the neighbourhood.

Poverty demanding such privation as this excites all the greater compassion among the Swiss, because it deprives them of a chance of profit. The cook of the establishment fed the three English boarders for a hundred francs a month inclusive. In Gersau it was generally believed, however, that the gardener and his wife, in spite of their pretensions, used the cook's name as a screen to net the little profits of this bargain. The Bergmanns had made beautiful gardens round their house, and had built a hothouse. The flowers, the fruit, and the botanical rarities of this spot were what had induced the young lady to settle on it as she passed through Gersau. Miss Fanny was said to be nineteen years old; she was the old man's youngest child, and the object of his adulation. About two months ago she had hired a

piano from Lucerne, for she seemed to be crazy about music.

'She loves flowers and music, and she is unmarried!' thought Rodolphe; 'what good luck!'

The next day Rodolphe went to ask leave to visit the hothouses and gardens, which were beginning to be somewhat famous. The permission was not immediately granted. The retired gardeners asked, strangely enough, to see Rodolphe's passport; it was sent to them at once. The paper was not returned to him till next morning, by the hands of the cook, who expressed her master's pleasure in showing him their place. Rodolphe went to the Bergmanns, not without a certain trepidation, known only to persons of strong feelings, who go through as much passion in a moment as some men experience in a whole lifetime.

After dressing himself carefully to gratify the old gardeners of the Borromean Islands, whom he regarded as the warders of his treasure, he went all over the grounds, looking at the house now and again, but with much caution; the old couple treated him with evident distrust. But his attention was soon attracted by the little English deaf-mute, in whom his discernment, though young as yet, enabled him to recognise a girl of African, or at least of Sicilian, origin. The child had the golden-brown colour of a Havannah cigar, eyes of fire, Armenian eyelids with lashes of very un-British length, hair blacker than black; and under this almost olive skin, sinews of extraordinary strength and feverish alertness. She looked at Rodolphe with amazing curiosity and effrontery, watching his every movement.

'To whom does that little Moresco belong?' he asked worthy Madame Bergmann.

'To the English,' Monsieur Bergmann replied.

'But she never was born in England!'

'They may have brought her from the Indies,' said Madame Bergmann.

'I have been told that Miss Lovelace is fond of music. I should be delighted if, during the residence by the lake to which I am condemned by my doctor's orders, she would allow me to join her.'

'They receive no one, and will not see anybody,' said the old gardener.

Rodolphe bit his lips and went away, without having been invited into the house, or taken into the part of the garden that lay between the front of the house and the shore of the little promontory. On that side the house had a balcony above the first floor, made of wood, and covered by the roof, which projected deeply like the roof of a chalet on all four sides of the building, in the Swiss fashion. Rodolphe had loudly praised the elegance of this arrangement, and talked of the view from that balcony, but all in vain. When he had taken leave of the Bergmanns it struck him that he was a simpleton, like any man of spirit and imagination disappointed of the results of a plan which he had believed would succeed.

In the evening he, of course, went out in a boat on the lake, round and about the spit of land, to Brunnen and to Schwytz, and came in at nightfall. From afar he saw the window open and brightly lighted; he heard the sound of a piano and the tones of an exquisite voice. He made the boatmen stop, and gave himself up to the pleasure of listening to an Italian air delightfully sung. When the singing ceased, Rodolphe landed and sent away the boat and rowers. At the cost of wetting his feet, he went to sit down under the water-worn granite shelf crowned by a thick hedge of thorny acacia, by the side of which ran a long lime avenue in the Bergmanns' garden. By the end of an hour he heard steps and voices just above him, but the words that reached his ears were all Italian, and spoken by two women.

He took advantage of the moment when the two speakers were at one end of the walk to slip noiselessly

to the other. After half an hour of struggling he got to the end of the avenue, and there took up a position whence, without being seen or heard, he could watch the two women without being observed by them as they came towards him. What was Rodolphe's amazement on recognising the deaf-mute as one of them; she was talking to Miss Lovelace in Italian.

It was now eleven o'clock at night. The stillness was so perfect on the lake and around the dwelling, that the two women must have thought themselves safe; in all Gersau there could be no eyes open but theirs. Rodolphe supposed that the girl's dumbness must be a necessary deception. From the way in which they both spoke Italian, Rodolphe suspected that it was the mother tongue of both girls, and concluded that the name of English also hid some disguise.

'They are Italian refugees,' said he to himself, 'outlaws in fear of the Austrian or Sardinian police. The young lady waits till it is dark to walk and talk in security.'

He lay down by the side of the hedge, and crawled like a snake to find a way between two acacia shrubs. At the risk of leaving his coat behind him, or tearing deep scratches in his back, he got through the hedge when the so-called Miss Fanny and her pretended deaf-and-dumb maid were at the other end of the path; then, when they had come within twenty yards of him without seeing him, for he was in the shadow of the hedge, and the moon was shining brightly, he suddenly rose.

'Fear nothing,' said he in French to the Italian girl, 'I am not a spy. You are refugees, I have guessed that. I am a Frenchman whom one look from you has fixed at Gersau.'

Rodolphe, startled by the acute pain caused by some steel instrument piercing his side, fell like a log.

'*Nel lago con pietra!*' said the terrible dumb girl.

'Oh, Gina!' exclaimed the Italian.

'She has missed me,' said Rodolphe, pulling from the wound a stiletto, which had been turned by one of the false ribs. 'But a little higher up it would have been deep in my heart.—I was wrong, Francesca,' he went on, remembering the name he had heard little Gina repeat several times; 'I owe her no grudge, do not scold her. The happiness of speaking to you is well worth the prick of a stiletto. Only show me the way out; I must get back to the Stopfers' house. Be easy; I shall tell nothing.'

Francesca, recovering from her astonishment, helped Rodolphe to rise, and said a few words to Gina, whose eyes filled with tears. The two girls made him sit down on a bench and take off his coat, his waistcoat, and his cravat. Then Gina opened his shirt and sucked the wound strongly. Francesca, who had left them, returned with a large piece of sticking-plaister, which she applied to the wound.

'You can walk now as far as your house,' she said.

Each took an arm, and Rodolphe was conducted to a side gate, of which the key was in Francesca's apron pocket.

'Does Gina speak French?' said Rodolphe to Francesca.

'No. But do not excite yourself,' replied Francesca with some impatience.

'Let me look at you,' said Rodolphe pathetically, 'for it may be long before I am able to come again——'

He leaned against one of the gate-posts contemplating the beautiful Italian, who allowed him to gaze at her for a moment under the sweetest silence and the sweetest night which ever, perhaps, shone on this lake, the king of Swiss lakes.

Francesca was quite of the classic Italian type, and such as imagination supposes or pictures, or, if you will, dreams, that Italian women are. What first struck Rodolphe was the grace and elegance of a figure evidently

powerful, though so slender as to appear fragile. An amber paleness overspread her face, betraying sudden interest, but it did not dim the voluptuous glance of her liquid eyes of velvety blackness. A pair of hands as beautiful as ever a Greek sculptor added to the polished arms of a statue grasped Rodolphe's arm, and their whiteness gleamed against his black coat. The rash Frenchman could but just discern the long, oval shape of her face, and a melancholy mouth showing brilliant teeth between the parted lips, full, fresh, and brightly red. The exquisite lines of this face guaranteed to Francesca permanent beauty; but what most struck Rodolphe was the adorable freedom, the Italian frankness of this woman, wholly absorbed as she was in her pity for him.

Francesca said a word to Gina, who gave Rodolphe her arm as far as the Stopfers' door, and fled like a swallow as soon as she had rung.

'These patriots do not play at killing!' said Rodolphe to himself as he felt his sufferings when he found himself in his bed. '"*Nel lago!*" Gina would have pitched me into the lake with a stone tied to my neck.'

Next day he sent to Lucerne for the best surgeon there, and when he came, enjoined on him absolute secrecy, giving him to understand that his honour depended on it.

Léopold returned from his excursion on the day when his friend first got out of bed. Rodolphe made up a story, and begged him to go to Lucerne to fetch their luggage and letters. Léopold brought back the most fatal, the most dreadful news: Rodolphe's mother was dead. While the two friends were on their way from Bâle to Lucerne, the fatal letter, written by Léopold's father, had reached Lucerne the day they left for Fluelen.

In spite of Léopold's utmost precautions, Rodolphe fell ill of a nervous fever. As soon as Léopold saw his

friend out of danger, he set out for France with a power of attorney, and Rodolphe could thus remain at Gersau, the only place in the world where his grief could grow calmer. The young Frenchman's position, his despair, the circumstances which made such a loss worse for him than for any other man, were known, and secured him the pity and interest of every one at Gersau. Every morning the pretended dumb girl came to see him and bring him news of her mistress.

As soon as Rodolphe could go out he went to the Bergmanns' house, to thank Miss Fanny Lovelace and her father for the interest they had taken in his sorrow and his illness. For the first time since he had lodged with the Bergmanns the old Italian admitted a stranger to his room, where Rodolphe was received with the cordiality due to his misfortunes and to his being a Frenchman, which excluded all distrust of him. Francesca looked so lovely by candle-light that first evening that she shed a ray of brightness on his grieving heart. Her smiles flung the roses of hope on his woe. She sang, not indeed gay songs, but grave and solemn melodies suited to the state of Rodolphe's heart, and he observed this touching care.

At about eight o'clock the old man left the young people without any sign of uneasiness, and went to his room. When Francesca was tired of singing, she led Rodolphe on to the balcony, whence they perceived the sublime scenery of the lake, and signed to him to be seated by her on a rustic wooden bench.

'Am I very indiscreet in asking how old you are, cara Francesca?' said Rodolphe.

'Nineteen,' said she, 'well past.'

'If anything in the world could soothe my sorrow,' he went on, 'it would be the hope of winning you from your father, whatever your fortune may be. So beautiful as you are, you seem to me richer than a prince's daughter. And I tremble as I confess to you the feelings

with which you have inspired me; but they are deep—they are eternal.'

'*Zitto!*' said Francesca, laying a finger of her right hand on her lips. 'Say no more: I am not free. I have been married these three years.'

For a few minutes utter silence reigned. When the Italian girl, alarmed at Rodolphe's stillness, went close to him, she found that he had fainted.

'*Povero!*' she said to herself. 'And I thought him cold.'

She fetched some salts, and revived Rodolphe by making him smell at them.

'Married!' said Rodolphe, looking at Francesca. And then his tears flowed freely.

'Child!' said she. 'But there still is hope. My husband is——'

'Eighty?' Rodolphe put in.

'No,' said she with a smile, 'but sixty-five. He has disguised himself as much older to mislead the police.'

'Dearest,' said Rodolphe, 'a few more shocks of this kind and I shall die. Only when you have known me twenty years will you understand the strength and power of my heart, and the nature of its aspirations for happiness. This plant,' he went on, pointing to the yellow jasmine which covered the balustrade, 'does not climb more eagerly to spread itself in the sunbeams than I have clung to you for this month past. I love you with unique passion. That love will be the secret fount of my life—I may possibly die of it.'

'Oh! Frenchman, Frenchman!' said she, emphasising her exclamation with a little incredulous grimace.

'Shall I not be forced to wait, to accept you at the hands of time?' said he gravely. 'But know this; if you are in earnest in what you have allowed to escape you, I will wait for you faithfully, without suffering any other attachment to grow up in my heart.'

She looked at him doubtfully.

'None,' said he, 'not even a passing fancy. I have my fortune to make; you must have a splendid one, nature created you a princess——'

At this word Francesca could not repress a faint smile, which gave her face the most bewitching expression, something subtle, like what the great Leonardo has so well depicted in the *Gioconda.* This smile made Rodolphe pause. 'Ah yes!' he went on, 'you must suffer much from the destitution to which exile has brought you. Oh, if you would make me happy above all men, and consecrate my love, you would treat me as a friend. Ought I not to be your friend?—My poor mother has left sixty thousand francs of savings; take half.'

Francesca looked steadily at him. This piercing gaze went to the bottom of Rodolphe's soul.

'We want nothing; my work amply supplies our luxuries,' she replied in a grave voice.

'And can I endure that a Francesca should work?' cried he. 'One day you will return to your country and find all you left there.' Again the Italian girl looked at Rodolphe. 'And you will then repay me what you may have condescended to borrow,' he added, with an expression full of delicate feeling.

'Let us drop this subject,' said she, with incomparable dignity of gesture, expression, and attitude. 'Make a splendid fortune, be one of the remarkable men of your country; that is my desire. Fame is a drawbridge which may serve to cross a deep gulf. Be ambitious if you must. I believe you have great and powerful talents, but use them rather for the happiness of mankind than to deserve me; you will be all the greater in my eyes.'

In the course of this conversation, which lasted two hours, Rodolphe discovered that Francesca was an enthusiast for Liberal ideas, and for that worship of liberty which had led to the three revolutions in Naples, Piémont, and Spain. On leaving, he was shown to the door by Gina, the so-called mute. At eleven o'clock

no one was astir in the village, there was no fear of listeners; Rodolphe took Gina into a corner, and asked her in a low voice and bad Italian, 'Who are your master and mistress, child? Tell me, I will give you this fine new gold piece.'

'Monsieur,' said the girl, taking the coin, 'my master is the famous bookseller Lamporani of Milan, one of the leaders of the revolution, and the conspirator of all others whom Austria would most like to have in the Spielberg.'

'A bookseller's wife! Ah, so much the better,' thought he; 'we are on an equal footing.—And what is her family?' he added, 'for she looks like a queen.'

'All Italian women do,' replied Gina proudly. 'Her father's name is Colonna.'

Emboldened by Francesca's modest rank, Rodolphe had an awning fitted to his boat and cushions in the stern. When this was done, the lover came to propose to Francesca to come out on the lake. The Italian accepted, no doubt to carry out her part of a young English Miss in the eyes of the villagers, but she brought Gina with her. Francesca Colonna's lightest actions betrayed a superior education and the highest social rank. By the way in which she took her place at the end of the boat Rodolphe felt himself in some sort cut off from her, and, in the face of a look of pride worthy of an aristocrat, the familiarity he had intended fell dead. By a glance Francesca made herself a princess, with all the prerogatives she might have enjoyed in the Middle Ages. She seemed to have read the thoughts of this vassal who was so audacious as to constitute himself her protector.

Already, in the furniture of the room where Francesca had received him, in her dress, and in the various trifles she made use of, Rodolphe had detected indications of a superior character and a fine fortune. All these observations now recurred to his mind; he became thoughtful after having been trampled on, as it were, by Francesca's dignity. Gina, her half-grown-up *confidante*, also seemed

to have a mocking expression as she gave a covert or a side glance at Rodolphe. This obvious disagreement between the Italian lady's rank and her manners was a fresh puzzle to Rodolphe, who suspected some further trick like Gina's assumed dumbness.

'Where would you go, Signora Lamporani?' he asked.

'Towards Lucerne,' replied Francesca in French.

'Good!' said Rodolphe to himself, 'she is not startled by hearing me speak her name; she had, no doubt, foreseen that I should ask Gina—she is so cunning.—What is your quarrel with me?' he went on, going at last to sit down by her side, and asking her by a gesture to give him her hand, which she withdrew. 'You are cold and ceremonious; what, in colloquial language, we should call *short*.'

'It is true,' she replied with a smile. 'I am wrong. It is not good manners; it is vulgar. In French you would call it inartistic. It is better to be frank than to harbour cold or hostile feelings towards a friend, and you have already proved yourself my friend. Perhaps I have gone too far with you. You must have taken me to be a very ordinary woman.'—Rodolphe made many signs of denial.—'Yes,' said the bookseller's wife, going on without noticing this pantomime, which, however, she plainly saw. 'I have detected that, and naturally I have reconsidered my conduct. Well! I will put an end to everything by a few words of deep truth. Understand this, Rodolphe: I feel in myself the strength to stifle a feeling if it were not in harmony with my ideas or anticipation of what true love is. I could love—as we can love in Italy, but I know my duty. No intoxication can make me forget it. Married without my consent to that poor old man, I might take advantage of the liberty he so generously gives me; but three years of married life imply acceptance of its laws. Hence the most vehement passion would never make me utter, even involuntarily, a wish to find myself free.

'Emilio knows my character. He knows that without my heart, which is my own, and which I might give away, I should never allow any one to take my hand. That is why I have just refused it to you. I desire to be loved and waited for with fidelity, nobleness, ardour, while all I can give is infinite tenderness of which the expression may not overstep the boundary of the heart, the permitted neutral ground. All this being thoroughly understood—Oh!' she went on with a girlish gesture, 'I will be as coquettish, as gay, as glad, as a child which knows nothing of the dangers of familiarity.'

This plain and frank declaration was made in a tone, an accent, and supported by a look which gave it the deepest stamp of truth.

'A Princess Colonna could not have spoken better,' said Rodolphe, smiling.

'Is that,' she answered with some haughtiness, 'a reflection on the humbleness of my birth? Must your love flaunt a coat-of-arms? At Milan the noblest names are written over shop-doors: Sforza, Canova, Visconti, Trivulzio, Ursini; there are Archintos apothecaries; but, believe me, though I keep a shop, I have the feelings of a duchess.'

'A reflection? Nay, Madame, I meant it for praise.'

'By a comparison?' she said archly.

'Ah, once for all,' said he, 'not to torture me if my words should ill express my feelings, understand that my love is perfect; it carries with it absolute obedience and respect.'

She bowed as a woman satisfied, and said, 'Then Monsieur accepts the treaty?'

'Yes,' said he. 'I can understand that in a rich and powerful feminine nature the faculty of loving ought not to be wasted, and that you, out of delicacy, wished to restrain it. Ah! Francesca, at my age tenderness requited, and by so sublime, so royally beautiful a creature as you are—why, it is the fulfilment of all my wishes. To

love you as you desire to be loved—is not that enough to make a young man guard himself against every evil folly? Is it not to concentrate all his powers in a noble passion, of which in the future he may be proud, and which can leave none but lovely memories? If you could but know with what hues you have clothed the chain of Pilatus, the Rigi, and this superb lake——'

'I want to know,' said she, with the Italian artlessness which has always a touch of artfulness.

'Well, this hour will shine on all my life like a diamond on a queen's brow.'

Francesca's only reply was to lay her hand on Rodolphe's.

'Oh dearest! for ever dearest!—Tell me, have you never loved?'

'Never.'

'And you allow me to love you nobly, looking to heaven for the utmost fulfilment?' he asked.

She gently bent her head. Two large tears rolled down Rodolphe's cheeks.

'Why! what is the matter?' she cried, abandoning her imperial manner.

'I have now no mother whom I can tell of my happiness; she left this earth without seeing what would have mitigated her agony——'

'What?' said she.

'Her tenderness replaced by an equal tenderness——'

'*Povero mio!*' exclaimed the Italian, much touched. 'Believe me,' she went on after a pause, 'it is a very sweet thing, and to a woman, a strong element of fidelity to know that she is all in all on earth to the man she loves; to find him lonely, with no family, with nothing in his heart but his love—in short, to have him wholly to herself.'

When two lovers thus understand each other, the heart feels delicious peace, supreme tranquillity. Certainty is the basis for which human feelings crave, for it is never

lacking to religious sentiment; man is always certain of being fully repaid by God. Love never believes itself secure but by this resemblance to divine love. And the raptures of that moment must have been fully felt to be understood; it is unique in life; it can never return no more, alas! than the emotions of youth. To believe in a woman, to make her your human religion, the fount of life, the secret luminary of all your least thoughts!—is not this a second birth? And a young man mingles with this love a little of the feeling he had for his mother.

Rodolphe and Francesca for some time remained in perfect silence, answering each other by sympathetic glances full of thoughts. They understood each other in the midst of one of the most beautiful scenes of Nature, whose glories, interpreted by the glory in their hearts, helped to stamp on their minds the most fugitive details of that unique hour. There had not been the slightest shade of frivolity in Francesca's conduct. It was noble, large, and without any second thought. This magnanimity struck Rodolphe greatly, for in it he recognised the difference between the Italian and the Frenchwoman. The waters, the land, the sky, the woman, all were grandiose and suave, even their love in the midst of this picture, so vast in its expanse, so rich in detail, where the sternness of the snowy peaks and their hard folds standing clearly out against the blue sky, reminded Rodolphe of the circumstances which limited his happiness: a lovely country shut in by snows.

This delightful intoxication of soul was destined to be disturbed. A boat was approaching from Lucerne; Gina, who had been watching it attentively, gave a joyful start, though faithful to her part as a mute. The bark came nearer; when at length Francesca could distinguish the faces on board, she exclaimed, 'Tito!' as she perceived a young man. She stood up, and remained standing at the risk of being drowned. 'Tito! Tito!' cried she, waving her handkerchief.

Tito desired the boatmen to slacken, and the two boats pulled side by side. The Italian and Tito talked with such extreme rapidity, and in a dialect unfamiliar to a man who hardly knew even the Italian of books, that Rodolphe could neither hear nor guess the drift of this conversation. But Tito's handsome face, Francesca's familiarity, and Gina's expression of delight, all aggrieved him. And indeed no lover can help being ill pleased at finding himself neglected for another, whoever he may be. Tito tossed a little leather bag to Gina, full of gold no doubt, and a packet of letters to Francesca, who began to read them, with a farewell wave of the hand to Tito.

'Get quickly back to Gersau,' she said to the boatmen. 'I will not let my poor Emilio pine ten minutes longer than he need.'

'What has happened?' asked Rodolphe, as he saw Francesca finish reading the last letter.

'*La libertà!*' she exclaimed, with an artist's enthusiasm.

'*E denaro!*' added Gina, like an echo, for she had found her tongue.

'Yes,' said Francesca, 'no more poverty! For more than eleven months have I been working, and I was beginning to be tired of it. I am certainly not a literary woman.'

'Who is this Tito?' asked Rodolphe.

'The Secretary of State to the financial department of the humble shop of the Colonnas, in other words, the son of our *ragionato*. Poor boy! he could not come by the Saint-Gothard, nor by the Mont-Cenis, nor by the Simplon; he came by sea, by Marseilles, and had to cross France. Well, in three weeks we shall be at Geneva, and living at our ease. Come, Rodolphe,' she added, seeing sadness overspread the Parisian's face, 'is not the Lake of Geneva quite as good as the Lake of Lucerne?'

'But allow me to bestow a regret on the Bergmanns'

delightful house,' said Rodolphe, pointing to the little promontory.

'Come and dine with us to add to your associations, *povero mio*,' said she. 'This is a great day; we are out of danger. My mother writes that within a year there will be an amnesty. Oh! *la cara patria!*'

These three words made Gina weep. 'Another winter here,' said she, 'and I should have been dead!'

'Poor little Sicilian kid!' said Francesca, stroking Gina's head with an expression and an affection which made Rodolphe long to be so caressed, even if it were without love.

The boat grounded; Rodolphe sprang on to the sand, offered his hand to the Italian lady, escorted her to the door of the Bergmanns' house, and went to dress and return as soon as possible.

When he joined the librarian and his wife, who were sitting on the balcony, Rodolphe could scarcely repress an exclamation of surprise at seeing the prodigious change which the good news had produced in the old man. He now saw a man of about sixty, extremely well preserved, a lean Italian, as straight as an I, with hair still black though thin and showing a white skull, with bright eyes, a full set of white teeth, a face like Cæsar, and on his diplomatic lips a sardonic smile, the almost false smile under which a man of good breeding hides his real feelings.

'Here is my husband under his natural form,' said Francesca gravely.

'He is quite a new acquaintance,' replied Rodolphe, bewildered.

'Quite,' said the librarian; 'I have played many a part, and know well how to make up. Ah! I played one in Paris under the Empire, with Bourrienne, Madame Murat, Madame d'Abrantis *e tuttè quanti*. Everything we take the trouble to learn in our youth, even the most futile, is of use. If my wife had not received a man's

education—an unheard-of thing in Italy—I should have been obliged to chop wood to get my living here. *Povera* Francesca! who would have told me that she would some day maintain me!'

As he listened to this worthy bookseller, so easy, so affable, so hale, Rodolphe scented some mystification, and preserved the watchful silence of a man who has been duped.

'*Che avete, signor?*' Francesca asked with simplicity. 'Does our happiness sadden you?'

'Your husband is a young man,' he whispered in her ear.

She broke into such a frank, infectious laugh that Rodolphe was still more puzzled.

'He is but sixty-five, at your service,' said she; 'but I can assure you that even that is something—to be thankful for!'

'I do not like to hear you jest about an affection so sacred as this, of which you yourself prescribed the conditions.'

'*Zitto!*' said she, stamping her foot, and looking whether her husband were listening. 'Never disturb the peace of mind of that dear man, as simple as a child, and with whom I can do what I please. He is under my protection,' she added. 'If you could know with what generosity he risked his life and fortune because I was a Liberal! for he does not share my political opinions. Is not that love, Monsieur Frenchman?—But they are like that in his family. Emilio's younger brother was deserted for a handsome youth by the woman he loved. He thrust his sword through his own heart ten minutes after he had said to his servant, "I could of course kill my rival, but it would grieve the *Diva* too deeply."'

This mixture of dignity and banter, of haughtiness and playfulness, made Francesca at this moment the most fascinating creature in the world. The dinner and the

evening were full of cheerfulness, justified, indeed, by the relief of the two refugees, but depressing to Rodolphe.

'Can she be fickle?' he asked himself as he returned to the Stopfers' house. 'She sympathised in my sorrow, and I cannot take part in her joy!'

He blamed himself, justifying this girl-wife.

'She has no taint of hypocrisy, and is carried away by impulse,' thought he, 'and I want her to be like a Parisian woman.'

Next day and the following days, in fact, for twenty days after, Rodolphe spent all his time at the Bergmanns', watching Francesca without having determined to watch her. In some souls admiration is not independent of a certain penetration. The young Frenchman discerned in Francesca the imprudence of girlhood, the true nature of a woman as yet unbroken, sometimes struggling against her love, and at other moments yielding and carried away by it. The old man certainly behaved to her as a father to his daughter, and Francesca treated him with a deeply felt gratitude which roused her instinctive nobleness. The situation and the woman were to Rodolphe an impenetrable enigma, of which the solution attracted him more and more.

These last days were full of secret joys, alternating with melancholy moods, with tiffs and quarrels even more delightful than the hours when Rodolphe and Francesca were of one mind. And he was more and more fascinated by this tenderness apart from wit, always and in all things the same, an affection that was jealous of mere nothings—already!

'You care very much for luxury?' said he one evening to Francesca, who was expressing her wish to get away from Gersau, where she missed many things.

'I!' cried she. 'I love luxury as I love the arts, as I love a picture by Raphael, a fine horse, a beautiful day, or the Bay of Naples. Emilio,' she went on, 'have

I ever complained here during our days of privation?'

'You would not have been yourself if you had,' replied the old man gravely.

'After all, is it not in the nature of plain folks to aspire to grandeur?' she asked, with a mischievous glance at Rodolphe and at her husband. 'Were my feet made for fatigue?' she added, putting out two pretty little feet. 'My hands'—and she held one out to Rodolphe—'were those hands made to work?—Leave us,' she said to her husband; 'I want to speak to him.'

The old man went into the drawing-room with sublime good faith; he was sure of his wife.

'I will not have you come with us to Geneva,' she said to Rodolphe. 'It is a gossiping town. Though I am far above the nonsense the world talks, I do not choose to be calumniated, not for my own sake, but for his. I make it my pride to be the glory of that old man, who is, after all, my only protector. We are leaving; stay here a few days. When you come on to Geneva, call first on my husband, and let him introduce you to me. Let us hide our great and unchangeable affection from the eyes of the world. I love you; you know it; but this is how I will prove it to you—you shall never discern in my conduct anything whatever that may arouse your jealousy.'

She drew him into a corner of the balcony, kissed him on the forehead, and fled, leaving him in amazement.

Next day Rodolphe heard that the lodgers at the Bergmanns' had left at daybreak. It then seemed to him intolerable to remain at Gersau, and he set out for Vevay by the longest route, starting sooner than was necessary. Attracted to the waters of the lake where the beautiful Italian awaited him, he reached Geneva by the end of October. To avoid the discomforts of the town he took rooms in a house at Eaux-Vives, outside the walls. As soon as he was settled, his

first care was to ask his landlord, a retired jeweller, whether some Italian refugees from Milan had not lately come to reside at Geneva.

'Not so far as I know,' replied the man. 'Prince and Princess Colonna of Rome have taken Monsieur Jeanrenaud's place for three years; it is one of the finest on the lake. It is situated between the Villa Diodati and that of Monsieur Lafin-de-Dieu, let to the Vicomtesse de Beauséant. Prince Colonna has come to see his daughter and his son-in-law Prince Gandolphini, a Neopolitan, or if you like, a Sicilian, an old adherent of King Murat's, and a victim of the last revolution. These are the last arrivals at Geneva, and they are not Milanese. Serious steps had to be taken, and the Pope's interest in the Colonna family was invoked, to obtain permission from the foreign powers and the King of Naples for the Prince and Princesse Gandolphini to live here. Geneva is anxious to do nothing to displease the Holy Alliance to which it owes its independence. *Our* part is not to ruffle foreign courts: there are many foreigners here, Russians and English.'

'Even some Genevese.'

'Yes, Monsieur, our lake is so fine! Lord Byron lived here about seven years at the Villa Diodati, which every one goes to see now, like Coppet and Ferney.'

'You cannot tell me whether within a week or so a bookseller from Milan has come with his wife—named Lamporani, one of the leaders of the last revolution?'

'I could easily find out by going to the Foreigners' Club,' said the jeweller.

Rodolphe's first walk was very naturally to the Villa Diodati, the residence of Lord Byron, whose recent death added to its attractiveness: for is not death the consecration of genius?

The road to Eaux-Vives follows the shore of the lake, and, like all the roads in Switzerland, is very narrow; in some spots, in consequence of the configuration of the

hilly ground, there is scarcely space for two carriages to pass each other.

At a few yards from the Jeanrenauds' house, which he was approaching without knowing it, Rodolphe heard the sound of a carriage behind him, and, finding himself in a sunk road, he climbed to the top of a rock to leave the road free. Of course he looked at the approaching carriage—an elegant English phaeton, with a splendid pair of English horses. He felt quite dizzy as he beheld in this carriage Francesca, beautifully dressed, by the side of an old lady as hard as a cameo. A servant blazing with gold lace stood behind. Francesca recognised Rodolphe, and smiled at seeing him like a statue on a pedestal. The carriage, which the lover followed with his eyes as he climbed the hill, turned in at the gate of a country house, towards which he ran.

'Who lives here?' he asked of the gardener.

'Prince and Princess Colonna, and Prince and Princess Gandolphini.'

'Have they not just driven in?'

'Yes, sir.'

In that instant a veil fell from Rodolphe's eyes; he saw clearly the meaning of the past.

'If only this is her last piece of trickery!' thought the thunder-struck lover to himself.

He trembled lest he should have been the plaything of a whim, for he had heard what a *capriccio* might mean in an Italian. But what a crime had he committed in the eyes of a woman—in accepting a born princess as a citizen's wife! in believing that a daughter of one of the most illustrious houses of the Middle Ages was the wife of a bookseller! The consciousness of his blunders increased Rodolphe's desire to know whether he would be ignored and repelled. He asked for Prince Gandolphini, sending in his card, and was immediately received by the false Lamporani, who came forward to meet him, welcomed him with the best possible grace, and took

him to walk on a terrace whence there was a view of Geneva, the Jura, the hills covered with villas, and below them a wide expanse of the lake.

'My wife is faithful to the lakes, you see,' he remarked, after pointing out the details to his visitor. 'We have a sort of concert this evening,' he added, as they returned to the splendid Villa Jeanrenaud. 'I hope you will do me and the Princess the pleasure of seeing you. Two months of poverty endured in intimacy are equal to years of friendship.'

Though he was consumed by curiosity, Rodolphe dared not ask to see the Princess; he slowly made his way back to Eaux-Vives, looking forward to the evening. In a few hours his passion, great as it had already been, was augmented by his anxiety and by suspense as to future events. He now understood the necessity for making himself famous, that he might some day find himself, socially speaking, on a level with his idol. In his eyes Francesca was made really great by the simplicity and ease of her conduct at Gersau. Princess Colonna's haughtiness, so evidently natural to her, alarmed Rodolphe, who would find enemies in Francesca's father and mother—at least so he might expect; and the secrecy which Princess Gandolphini had so strictly enjoined on him now struck him as a wonderful proof of affection. By not choosing to compromise the future, had she not confessed that she loved him?

At last nine o'clock struck; Rodolphe could get into a carriage and say with an emotion that is very intelligible, 'To the Villa Jeanrenaud—to Prince Gandolphini's.'

At last he saw Francesca, but without being seen by her. The Princess was standing quite near the piano. Her beautiful hair, so thick and long, was bound with a golden fillet. Her face, in the light of wax candles, had the brilliant pallor peculiar to Italians, and which looks its best only by artificial light. She was in full evening

dress, showing her fascinating shoulders, the figure of a girl and the arms of an antique statue. Her sublime beauty was beyond all possible rivalry, though there were some charming English and Russian ladies present, the prettiest women of Geneva, and other Italians, among them the dazzling and illustrious Princess Varese, and the famous singer Tinti, who was at that moment singing.

Rodolphe, leaning against the door-post, looked at the Princess, turning on her the fixed, tenacious, attracting gaze, charged with the full, insistent will which is concentrated in the feeling called desire, and thus assumes the nature of a vehement command. Did the flame of that gaze reach Francesca? Was Francesca expecting each instant to see Rodolphe? In a few minutes she stole a glance at the door, as though magnetised by this current of love, and her eyes, without reserve, looked deep into Rodolphe's. A slight thrill quivered through that superb face and beautiful body; the shock to her spirit reacted: Francesca blushed! Rodolphe felt a whole life in this exchange of looks, so swift that it can only be compared to a lightning flash. But to what could his happiness compare? He was loved. The lofty Princess, in the midst of her world, in this handsome villa, kept the pledge given by the disguised exile, the capricious beauty of Bergmanns' lodgings. The intoxication of such a moment enslaves a man for life! A faint smile, refined and subtle, candid and triumphant, curled Princess Gandolphini's lips, and at a moment when she did not feel herself observed she looked at Rodolphe with an expression which seemed to ask his pardon for having deceived him as to her rank.

When the song was ended Rodolphe could make his way to the Prince, who graciously led him to his wife. Rodolphe went through the ceremonial of a formal introduction to Princess and Prince Colonna, and to Francesca. When this was over, the Princess had to

take part in the famous quartette, *Mi manca la voce*, which was sung by her with Tinti, with the famous tenor Genovese, and with a well-known Italian Prince then in exile, whose voice, if he had not been a Prince, would have made him one of the Princes of Art.

'Take that seat,' said Francesca to Rodolphe, pointing to her own chair. '*Oimè!* I think there is some mistake in my name; I have for the last minute been Princess Rodolphini.'

It was said with an artless grace which revived, in this avowal hidden beneath a jest, the happy days at Gersau. Rodolphe revelled in the exquisite sensation of listening to the voice of the woman he adored, while sitting so close to her that one cheek was almost touched by the stuff of her dress and the gauze of her scarf. But when, at such a moment, *Mi manca la voce* is being sung, and by the finest voices in Italy, it is easy to understand what it was that brought the tears to Rodolphe's eyes.

In love, as perhaps in all else, there are certain circumstances, trivial in themselves, but the outcome of a thousand little previous incidents, of which the importance is immense, as an epitome of the past and as a link with the future. A hundred times already we have felt the preciousness of the one we love; but a trifle—the perfect touch of two souls united during a walk perhaps by a single word, by some unlooked-for proof of affection, will carry the feeling to its supremest pitch. In short, to express this truth by an image which has been pre-eminently successful from the earliest ages of the world, there are in a long chain points of attachment needed where the cohesion is stronger than in the intermediate loops of rings. This recognition between Rodolphe and Francesca, at this party, in the face of the world, was one of those intense moments which join the future to the past, and rivet a real attachment more deeply in the heart. It was perhaps of these incidental rivets that Bossuet spoke when he compared to them the

rarity of happy moments in our lives—he who had such a living and secret experience of love.

Next to the pleasure of admiring the woman we love, comes that of seeing her admired by every one else. Rodolphe was enjoying both at once. Love is a treasury of memories, and though Rodolphe's was already full, he added to it pearls of great price; smiles shed aside for him alone, stolen glances, tones in her singing which Francesca addressed to him alone, but which made Tinti pale with jealousy, they were so much applauded. All his strength of desire, the special expression of his soul, was thrown over the beautiful Roman, who became unchangeably the beginning and the end of all his thoughts and actions. Rodolphe loved as every woman may dream of being loved, with a force, a constancy, a tenacity, which made Francesca the very substance of his heart; he felt her mingling with his blood as purer blood, with his soul as a more perfect soul; she would henceforth underlie the least efforts of his life as the golden sand of the Mediterranean lies beneath the waves. In short, Rodolphe's lightest aspiration was now a living hope.

At the end of a few days, Francesca understood this boundless love; but it was so natural, and so perfectly shared by her, that it did not surprise her. She was worthy of it.

'What is there that is strange?' said she to Rodolphe, as they walked on the garden terrace, when he had been betrayed into one of those outbursts of conceit which come so naturally to Frenchmen in the expression of their feelings—'what is extraordinary in the fact of your loving a young and beautiful woman, artist enough to be able to earn her living like Tinti, and of giving you some of the pleasures of vanity? What lout but would then become an Amadis? This is not in question between you and me. What is needed is that we both love faithfully, persistently; at a distance from each other for years, with no satisfaction but that of knowing that we are loved.'

'Alas!' said Rodolphe, 'will you not consider my fidelity as devoid of all merit when you see me absorbed in the efforts of devouring ambition? Do you imagine that I can wish to see you one day exchange the fine name of Gandolphini for that of a man who is a nobody? I want to become one of the most remarkable men of my country, to be rich, great—that you may be as proud of my name as of your own name of Colonna.'

'I should be grieved to see you without such sentiments in your heart,' she replied, with a bewitching smile. 'But do not wear yourself out too soon in your ambitious labours. Remain young. They say that politics soon make a man old.'

One of the rarest gifts in women is a certain gaiety which does not detract from tenderness. This combination of deep feeling with the lightness of youth added an enchanting grace at this moment to Francesca's charms. This is the key to her character; she laughs and she is touched; she becomes enthusiastic, and returns to arch raillery with a readiness, a facility, which make her the charming and exquisite creature she is, and for which her reputation is known outside Italy. Under the graces of a woman she conceals vast learning, thanks to the excessively monotonous, and almost monastic life she led in the castle of the old Colonnas.

This rich heiress was at first intended for the cloister, being the fourth child of Prince and Princess Colonna; but the death of her two brothers, and of her elder sister, suddenly brought her out of her retirement, and made her one of the most brilliant matches in the Papal States. Her elder sister had been betrothed to Prince Gandolphini, one of the richest landowners in Sicily; and Francesca was married to him instead, so that nothing might be changed in the position of the family. The Colonnas and Gandolphinis had always intermarried.

From the age of nine till she was sixteen, Francesca, under the direction of a Cardinal of the family, had read

all through the library of the Colonnas, to make weight against her ardent imagination by studying science, art, and letters. But in these studies she acquired the taste for independence and liberal ideas, which threw her, with her husband, into the ranks of the revolution. Rodolphe had not yet learned that, besides five living languages, Francesca knew Greek, Latin, and Hebrew. The charming creature perfectly understood that, for a woman, the first condition of being learned is to keep it deeply hidden.

Rodolphe spent the whole winter at Geneva. This winter passed like a day. When spring returned, notwithstanding the infinite delights of the society of a clever woman, wonderfully well informed, young and lovely, the lover went through cruel sufferings, endured indeed with courage, but which were sometimes legible in his countenance, and betrayed themselves in his manners or speech, perhaps because he believed that Francesca shared them. Now and again it annoyed him to admire her calmness. Like an Englishwoman, she seemed to pride herself on expressing nothing in her face; its serenity defied love; he longed to see her agitated; he accused her of having no feeling, for he believed in the tradition which ascribes to Italian women a feverish excitability.

'I am a Roman!' Francesca gravely replied one day when she took quite seriously some banter on this subject from Rodolphe.

There was a depth of tone in her reply which gave it the appearance of scathing irony, and which set Rodolphe's pulses throbbing. The month of May spread before them the treasures of her fresh verdure; the sun was sometimes as powerful as at midsummer. The two lovers happened to be at a part of the terrace where the rock rises abruptly from the lake, and were leaning over the stone parapet that crowns the wall above a flight of steps leading down to a landing-stage. From the neighbouring

villa, where there is a similar stairway, a boat presently shot out like a swan, its flag flaming, its crimson awning spread over a lovely woman comfortably reclining on red cushions, her hair wreathed with real flowers; the boatman was a young man dressed like a sailor, and rowing with all the more grace because he was under the lady's eye.

'They are happy!' exclaimed Rodolphe, with bitter emphasis. 'Claire de Bourgogne, the last survivor of the only house which could ever vie with the royal family of France——'

'Oh! of a bastard branch, and that a female line.'

'At any rate, she is Vicomtesse de Beauséant; and she did not——'

'Did not hesitate, you would say, to bury herself here with Monsieur Gaston de Nueil, you would say,' replied the daughter of the Colonnas. 'She is only a Frenchwoman; I am an Italian, my dear sir!'

Francesca turned away from the parapet, leaving Rodolphe, and went to the further end of the terrace, whence there is a wide prospect of the lake. Watching her as she slowly walked away, Rodolphe suspected that he had wounded her soul, at once so simple and so wise, so proud and so humble. It turned him cold; he followed Francesca, who signed to him to leave her to herself. But he did not heed the warning, and detected her wiping away her tears. Tears! in so strong a nature.

'Francesca,' said he, taking her hand, 'is there a single regret in your heart?'

She was silent, disengaged her hand which held her embroidered handkerchief, and again dried her eyes.

'Forgive me!' he said. And with a rush, he kissed her eyes to wipe away the tears.

Francesca did not seem aware of his passionate impulse, she was so violently agitated. Rodolphe, thinking she consented, grew bolder; he put his arm round her, clasped her to his heart, and snatched a kiss. But she

freed herself by a dignified movement of offended modesty, and, standing a yard off, she looked at him without anger, but with firm determination.

'Go this evening,' she said. 'We meet no more till we meet at Naples.'

The order was stern, but it was obeyed, for it was Francesca's will.

On his return to Paris, Rodolphe found in his rooms a portrait of Princess Gandolphini painted by Schinner, as Schinner can paint. The artist had passed through Geneva on his way to Italy. As he had positively refused to paint the portraits of several women, Rodolphe did not believe that the Prince, anxious as he was for a portrait of his wife, would be able to conquer the great painter's objections; but Francesca, no doubt, had bewitched him, and obtained from him—which was almost a miracle—an original portrait for Rodolphe, and a duplicate for Emilio. She told him this in a charming and delightful letter, in which the mind indemnified itself for the reserve required by the worship of the proprieties. The lover replied. Thus began, never to cease, a regular correspondence between Rodolphe and Francesca, the only indulgence they allowed themselves.

Rodolphe, possessed by an ambition sanctified by his love, set to work. First he longed to make his fortune, and risked his all in an undertaking to which he devoted all his faculties as well as his capital; but he, an inexperienced youth, had to contend against duplicity, which won the day. Thus three years were lost in a vast enterprise, three years of struggling and courage.

The Villèle ministry fell just when Rodolphe was ruined. The valiant lover thought he would seek in politics what commercial industry had refused him; but before braving the storms of this career, he went, all wounded and sick at heart, to have his bruises healed and his courage revived at Naples, where the Prince and

Princess had been reinstated in their place and rights on the King's accession. This, in the midst of his warfare, was a respite full of delights; he spent three months at the Villa Gandolphini, rocked in hope.

Rodolphe then began again to construct his fortune. His talents were already known; he was about to attain the desires of his ambition; a high position was promised him as the reward of his zeal, his devotion, and his past services, when the storm of July 1830 broke, and again his bark was swamped.

She, and God! These are the only witnesses of the brave efforts, the daring attempts of a young man gifted with fine qualities, but to whom, so far, the protection of luck—the god of fools—has been denied. And this indefatigable wrestler, upheld by love, comes back to fresh struggles, lighted on his way by an always friendly eye, an ever faithful heart.

Lovers! Pray for him!

As she finished this narrative, Mademoiselle de Watteville's cheeks were on fire; there was a fever in her blood. She was crying—but with rage. This little novel, inspired by the literary style then in fashion, was the first reading of the kind that Rosalie had ever had the chance of devouring. Love was depicted in it, if not by a master-hand, at any rate by a man who seemed to give his own impressions; and truth, even if unskilled, could not fail to touch a virgin soul. Here lay the secret of Rosalie's terrible agitation, of her fever and her tears; she was jealous of Francesca Colonna.

She never for an instant doubted the sincerity of this poetical flight; Albert had taken pleasure in telling the story of his passion, while changing the names of persons and perhaps of places. Rosalie was possessed by infernal curiosity. What woman but would, like her, have wanted to know her rival's name—for she too loved!

As she read these pages, to her really contagious, she had said solemnly to herself, 'I love him!'—She loved Albert, and felt in her heart a gnawing desire to fight for him, to snatch him from this unknown rival. She reflected that she knew nothing of music, and that she was not beautiful.

'He will never love me!' thought she.

This conclusion aggravated her anxiety to know whether she might not be mistaken, whether Albert really loved an Italian Princess, and was loved by her. In the course of this fateful night, the power of swift decision, which had characterised the famous Watteville, was fully developed in his descendant. She devised those whimsical schemes, round which hovers the imagination of most young girls when, in the solitude to which some injudicious mothers confine them, they are aroused by some tremendous event which the system of repression to which they are subjected could neither foresee nor prevent. She dreamed of descending by a ladder from the kiosk into the garden of the house occupied by Albert; of taking advantage of the lawyer's being asleep to look through the window into his private room. She thought of writing to him, or of bursting the fetters of Besançon society by introducing Albert to the drawing-room of the Hôtel de Rupt. This enterprise, which to the Abbé de Grancey even would have seemed the climax of the impossible, was a mere passing thought.

'Ah!' said she to herself, 'my father has a dispute pending as to his land at les Rouxey. I will go there! If there is no lawsuit, I will manage to make one, and *he* shall come into our drawing-room!' she cried, as she sprang out of bed and to the window to look at the fascinating gleam which shone through Albert's nights. The clock struck one; he was still asleep.

'I shall see him when he gets up; perhaps he will come to his window.'

At this instant Mademoiselle de Watteville was witness to an incident which promised to place in her power the means of knowing Albert's secrets. By the light of the moon she saw a pair of arms stretched out from the kiosk to help Jérôme, Albert's servant, to get across the coping of the wall and step into the little building. In Jérôme's accomplice Rosalie at once recognised Mariette the lady's-maid.

'Mariette and Jérôme!' said she to herself. 'Mariette, such an ugly girl! Certainly they must be ashamed of themselves.'

Though Mariette was horribly ugly and six-and-thirty, she had inherited several plots of land. She had been seventeen years with Madame de Watteville, who valued her highly for her bigotry, her honesty, and long service, and she had no doubt saved money and invested her wages and perquisites. Hence, earning about ten louis a year, she probably had by this time, including compound interest and her little inheritance, not less than ten thousand francs.

In Jérôme's eyes ten thousand francs could alter the laws of optics; he saw in Mariette a neat figure; he did not perceive the pits and seams which virulent smallpox had left on her flat, parched face; to him the crooked mouth was straight; and ever since Savaron, by taking him into his service, had brought him so near to the Wattevilles' house, he had laid siege systematically to the maid, who was as prim and sanctimonious as her mistress, and who, like every ugly old maid, was far more exacting than the handsomest.

If the night-scene in the kiosk is thus fully accounted for to all perspicacious readers, it was not so to Rosalie, though she derived from it the most dangerous lesson that can be given, that of a bad example. A mother brings her daughter up strictly, keeps her under her wing for seventeen years, and then, in one hour, a servant girl destroys the long and painful work, sometimes by a

word, often indeed by a gesture! Rosalie got into bed again, not without considering how she might take advantage of her discovery.

Next morning, as she went to Mass accompanied by Mariette—her mother was not well—Rosalie took the maid's arm, which surprised the country wench not a little.

'Mariette,' said she, 'is Jérôme in his master's confidence?'

'I do not know, Mademoiselle.'

'Do not play the innocent with me,' said Mademoiselle de Watteville drily. 'You let him kiss you last night under the kiosk; I no longer wonder that you so warmly approved of my mother's ideas for the improvements she planned.'

Rosalie could feel how Mariette was trembling by the shaking of her arm.

'I wish you no ill,' Rosalie went on. 'Be quite easy; I shall not say a word to my mother, and you can meet Jérôme as often as you please.'

'But, Mademoiselle,' replied Mariette, 'it is perfectly respectable; Jérôme honestly means to marry me——'

'But then,' said Rosalie, 'why meet at night?'

Mariette was dumbfounded, and could make no reply.

'Listen, Mariette; I am in love too! In secret and without any return. I am, after all, my father's and mother's only child. You have more to hope for from me than from any one else in the world——'

'Certainly, Mademoiselle, and you may count on us for life or death,' exclaimed Mariette, rejoiced at the unexpected turn of affairs.

'In the first place, silence for silence,' said Rosalie. 'I will not marry Monsieur de Soulas; but one thing I will have, and must have; my help and favour are yours on one condition only.

'What is that?'

'I must see the letters which Monsieur Savaron sends to the post by Jérôme.'

'But what for?' said Mariette in alarm.

'Oh! merely to read them, and you yourself shall post them afterwards. It will cause a little delay; that is all.'

At this moment they went into church, and each of them, instead of reading the order of Mass, fell into her own train of thought.

'Dear, dear, how many sins are there in all that?' thought Mariette.

Rosalie, whose soul, brain, and heart were completely upset by reading the story, by this time regarded it as history, written for her rival. By dint of thinking of nothing else, like a child, she ended by believing that the *Eastern Review* was no doubt forwarded to Albert's lady-love.

'Oh!' said she to herself, her head buried in her hands in the attitude of a person lost in prayer; 'Oh! how can I get my father to look through the list of people to whom the *Review* is sent?'

After breakfast she took a turn in the garden with her father, coaxing and cajoling him, and brought him to the kiosk.

'Do you suppose, my dear little papa, that our *Review* is ever read abroad?'

'It is but just started——'

'Well, I will wager that it is.'

'It is hardly possible.'

'Just go and find out, and note the names of any subscribers out of France.

Two hours later Monsieur de Watteville said to his daughter—

'I was right; there is not one foreign subscriber as yet. They hope to get some at Neufchâtel, at Berne, and at Geneva. One copy is, in fact, sent to Italy, but it is not paid for—to a Milanese lady at her country house at Belgirate, on Lago Maggiore.'

'What is her name?'

'The Duchesse d'Argaiolo.'

'Do you know her, papa?'

'I have heard about her. She was by birth a Princess Soderini, a Florentine, a very great lady, and quite as rich as her husband, who has one of the largest fortunes in Lombardy. Their villa on the Lago Maggiore is one of the sights of Italy.'

Two days after, Mariette placed the following letter in Mademoiselle de Watteville's hands:—

Albert Savaron to Léopold Hannequin.

'Yes, 'tis so, my dear friend; I am at Besançon, while you thought I was travelling. I would not tell you anything till success should begin, and now it is dawning. Yes, my dear Léopold, after so many abortive undertakings, over which I have shed the best of my blood, have wasted so many efforts, spent so much courage, I have made up my mind to do as you have done—to start on a beaten path, on the high road, as the longest but the safest. I can see you jump with surprise in your lawyer's chair!

'But do not suppose that anything is changed in my personal life, of which you alone in the world know the secret, and that under the reservations *she* insists on. I did not tell you, my friend; but I was horribly weary of Paris. The outcome of the first enterprise, on which I had founded all my hopes, and which came to a bad end in consequence of the utter rascality of my two partners, who combined to cheat and fleece me—me, though everything was done by my energy—made me give up the pursuit of a fortune after the loss of three years of my life. One of these years was spent in the law courts, and perhaps I should have come worse out of the scrape if I had not been made to study law when I was twenty.

'I made up my mind to go into politics solely, to the end that I may some day find my name in a list for promotion to the Senate under the title of Comte Albert Savaron de Savarus, and so revive in France a good name

now extinct in Belgium—though indeed I am neither legitimate nor legitimised.'

'Ah! I knew it! He is of noble birth!' exclaimed Rosalie, dropping the letter.

'You know how conscientiously I studied, how faithful and useful I was as an obscure journalist, and how excellent a secretary to the statesman who, on his part, was true to me in 1829. Flung to the depths once more by the revolution of July just when my name was becoming known, at the very moment when, as Master of Appeals, I was about to find my place as a necessary wheel in the political machine, I committed the blunder of remaining faithful to the fallen, and fighting for them, without them. Oh! why was I but three-and-thirty, and why did I not apply to you to make me eligible? I concealed from you all my devotedness and my dangers. What would you have? I was full of faith. We should not have agreed.

'Ten months ago, when you saw me so gay and contented, writing my political articles, I was in despair; I foresaw my fate, at the age of thirty-seven, with two thousand francs for my whole fortune, without the smallest fame, just having failed in a noble undertaking, the founding, namely, of a daily paper, answering only to a need of the future instead of appealing to the passions of the moment. I did not know which way to turn, and I felt my own value! I wandered about, gloomy and hurt, through the lonely places of Paris—Paris which had slipped through my fingers—thinking of my crushed ambitions, but never giving them up. Oh, what frantic letters I wrote at that time to *her*, my second conscience, my other self! Sometimes I would say to myself, "Why did I sketch so vast a programme of life? Why demand everything? Why not wait for happiness while devoting myself to some mechanical employment."

'I then looked about me for some modest appointment by which I might live. I was about to get the editorship

of a paper under a manager who did not know much about it, a man of wealth and ambition, when I took fright. "Would *she* ever accept as her husband a man who had stooped so low?" I wondered.

'This reflection made me two-and-twenty again. But, oh, my dear Léopold, how the soul is worn by these perplexities! What must not caged eagles suffer, and imprisoned lions!—They suffer what Napoleon suffered, not at Saint Helena, but on the Quay of the Tuileries, on the 10th of August, when he saw Louis XVI. defending himself so badly while he could have quelled the insurrection; as he actually did, on the same spot, a little later, in Vendémiaire. Well, my life has been a torment of that kind, extending over four years. How many a speech to the Chamber have I not delivered in the deserted alleys of the Bois de Boulogne! These wasted harangues have at any rate sharpened my tongue and accustomed my mind to formulate its ideas in words. And while I was undergoing this secret torture, you were getting married, you had paid for your business, you were made law-clerk to the Maire of your district, after gaining the cross for a wound at Saint-Merri.

'Now, listen. When I was a small boy and tortured cockchafers, the poor insects had one form of struggle which used almost to put me in a fever. It was when I saw them making repeated efforts to fly but without getting away, though they could spread their wings. We used to say, "They are marking time." Now, was this sympathy? Was it a vision of my own future?—Oh! to spread my wings and yet be unable to fly! That has been my predicament since that fine undertaking by which I was disgusted, but which has now made four families rich.

'At last, seven months ago, I determined to make myself a name at the Paris Bar, seeing how many vacancies had been left by the promotion of several lawyers to eminent positions. But when I remembered

the rivalry I had seen among men of the press, and how difficult it is to achieve anything of any kind in Paris, the arena where so many champions meet, I came to a determination painful to myself, but certain in its results, and perhaps quicker than any other. In the course of our conversations you had given me a picture of the society of Besançon, of the impossibility for a stranger to get on there, to produce the smallest effect, to get into society, or to succeed in any way whatever. It was there that I determined to set up my flag, thinking, and rightly, that I should meet with no opposition, but find myself alone to canvass for the election. The people of the Comté will not meet the outsider? The outsider will not meet them! They refuse to admit him to their drawing-rooms, he will never go there! He never shows himself anywhere, not even in the streets! But there is one class that elects the deputies—the commercial class. I am going especially to study commercial questions, with which I am already familiar; I will gain their law-suits, I will effect compromises, I will be the greatest pleader in Besançon. By and by I will start a *Review*, in which I will defend the interests of the country, will create them, or preserve them, or resuscitate them. When I shall have won a sufficient number of votes, my name will come out of the urn. For a long time the unknown barrister will be treated with contempt, but some circumstance will arise to bring him to the front—some unpaid defence, or a case which no other pleader will undertake.

'Well, my dear Léopold, I packed up my books in eleven cases, I bought such law-books as might prove useful, and I sent everything off, furniture and all, by carrier to Besançon. I collected my diplomas, and I went to bid you good-bye. The mail coach dropped me at Besançon, where, in three days' time, I chose a little set of rooms looking out over some gardens. I sumptuously arranged the mysterious private room where I spend my

nights and days, and where the portrait of my divinity reigns—of her to whom my life is dedicate, who fills it wholly, who is the mainspring of my efforts, the secret of my courage, the cause of my talents. Then, as soon as the furniture and books had come, I engaged an intelligent man-servant, and there I sat for five months like a hibernating marmot.

'My name had, however, been entered on the list of lawyers in the town. At last I was called one day to defend an unhappy wretch at the Assizes, no doubt in order to hear me speak for once! One of the most influential merchants of Besançon was on the jury; he had a difficult task to fulfil; I did my utmost for the man, and my success was absolute and complete. My client was innocent; I very dramatically secured the arrest of the real criminals, who had come forward as witnesses. In short, the Court and the public were united in their admiration. I managed to save the examining magistrate's pride by pointing out the impossibility of detecting a plot so skilfully planned.

'Then I had to fight a case for my merchant, and won his suit. The Cathedral Chapter next chose me to defend a tremendous action against the town, which had been going on for four years; I won that. Thus, after three trials, I had become the most famous advocate of Franche-Comté.

'But I bury my life in the deepest mystery, and so hide my aims. I have adopted habits which prevent my accepting any invitations. I am only to be consulted between six and eight in the morning; I go to bed after my dinner, and work at night. The Vicar-General, a man of parts, and very influential, who placed the Chapter's case in my hands after they had lost it in the lower Court, of course professed their gratitude. "Monsieur," said I, "I will win your suit, but I want no fee; I want more" (start of alarm on the Abbé's part). "You must know that I am a great loser by

putting myself forward in antagonism to the town. I came here only to leave the place as deputy. I mean to engage only in commercial cases, because commercial men return the members; they will distrust me if I defend 'the priests'—for to them you are simply the priests. If I undertake your defence, it is because I was, in 1828, private secretary to such a Minister" (again a start of surprise on the part of my Abbé), "and Master of Appeals, under the name of Albert de Savarus" (another start). "I have remained faithful to monarchical opinions; but, as you have not the majority of votes in Besançon, I must gain votes among the citizens. So the fee I ask of you is the votes you may be able secretly to secure for me at the opportune moment. Let us each keep our own counsel, and I will defend, for nothing, every case to which a priest of this diocese may be a party. Not a word about my previous life, and we will be true to each other."

'When he came to thank me afterwards, he gave me a note for five hundred francs, and said in my ear, "The votes are a bargain all the same."—I have in the course of five interviews made a friend, I think, of this Vicar-General.

'Now I am overwhelmed with business, and I undertake no cases but those brought me by merchants, saying that commercial questions are my specialty. This line of conduct attaches business men to me, and allows me to make friends with influential persons. So all goes well. Within a few months I shall have found a house to purchase in Besançon, so as to secure a qualification. I count on your lending me the necessary capital for this investment. If I should die, if I should fail, the loss would be too small to be any consideration between you and me. You will get the interest out of the rental, and I shall take good care to look out for something cheap, so that you may lose nothing by this mortgage, which is indispensable.

'Oh! my dear Léopold, no gambler with the last remains of his fortune in his pocket, bent on staking it at the Cercle des Etrangers for the last time one night, when he must come away rich or ruined, ever felt such a perpetual ringing in his ears, such a nervous moisture on his palms, such a fevered tumult in his brain, such inward qualms in his body as I go through every d: now that I am playing my last card in the game ambition. Alas! my dear and only friend, for near ten years now have I been struggling. This battle wit men and things, in which I have unceasingly poured o my strength and energy, and so constantly worn t springs of desire, has, so to speak, undermined my vitalit With all the appearance of a strong man of good healt I feel myself a wreck. Every day carries with it a sh of my inmost life. At every fresh effort I feel that should never be able to begin again. I have no power, vigour left but for happiness; and if it should never com to crown my head with roses, the *me* that is really m would cease to exist, I should be a ruined thing. should wish for nothing more in the world. I shoul want to cease from living. You know that power an fame, the vast moral empire that I crave, is but secondary it is to me only a means to happiness, the pedestal for m idol.

'To reach the goal and die, like the runner of anti quity! To see fortune and death stand on the threshol hand in hand! To win the beloved woman just whe love is extinct! To lose the faculty of enjoyment afte earning the right to be happy!—Of how many men ha this been the fate!

'But there surely is a moment when Tantalus rebels, crosses his arms, and defies hell, throwing up his part of the eternal dupe. That is what I shall come to if anything should thwart my plan; if, after stooping to the dust o provincial life, prowling like a starving tiger round thes tradesmen, these electors, to secure their votes; if, afte

wrangling in these squalid cases, and giving them my time—the time I might have spent on Lago Maggiore, seeing the waters she sees, basking in her gaze, hearing her voice—if, after all, I failed to scale the tribune and conquer the glory that should surround the name that is to succeed to that of Argaiolo! Nay, more than this, Léopold; there are days when I feel a heady languor; deep disgust surges up from the depths of my soul, especially when, abandoned to long day-dreams, I have lost myself in anticipation of the joys of blissful love! May it not be that our desire has only a certain modicum of power, and that it perishes, perhaps, of a too lavish effusion of its essence? For, after all, at this present, my life is fair, illuminated by faith, work, and love.

'Farewell, my friend; I send love to your children, and beg you to remember me to your excellent wife.—Yours, ALBERT.'

Rosalie read this letter twice through, and its general purport was stamped on her heart. She suddenly saw the whole of Albert's previous existence, for her quick intelligence threw light on all the details, and enabled her to take it all in. By adding this information to the little novel published in the *Review*, she now fully understood Albert. Of course, she exaggerated the greatness, remarkable as it was, of this lofty soul and potent will, and her love for Albert thenceforth became a passion, its violence enhanced by all the strength of her youth, the weariness of her solitude, and the unspent energy of her character. Love is in a young girl the effect of a natural law; but when her craving for affection is centred in an exceptional man, it is mingled with the enthusiasm which overflows in a youthful heart. Thus Mademoiselle de Watteville had in a few days reached a morbid and very dangerous stage of enamoured infatuation. The Baroness was much pleased with her daughter,

who, being under the spell of her absorbing thoughts, never resisted her will, seemed to be devoted to feminine occupations, and realised her mother's ideal of a docile daughter.

The lawyer was now engaged in Court two or three times a week. Though he was overwhelmed with business, he found time to attend the trials, call on the litigious merchants, and conduct the *Review*; keeping up his personal mystery, from the conviction that the more covert and hidden was his influence, the more real it would be. But he neglected no means of success, reading up the list of the electors of Besançon, and finding out their interests, their characters, their various friendships and antipathies. Did ever a Cardinal hoping to be made Pope give himself more trouble?

One evening Mariette, on coming to dress Rosalie for an evening party, handed to her, not without many groans over this treachery, a letter of which the address made Mademoiselle de Watteville shiver and redden and turn pale again as she read the address:—

To Madame la Duchesse d'Argaiolo
(née Princesse Soderini),
At Belgirate,
Lago Maggiore, Italy.

In her eyes this direction blazed as the words *Mene*, *Tekel*, *Upharsin*, did in the eyes of Belshazzar. After concealing the letter, Rosalie went downstairs to accompany her mother to Madame de Chavoncourt's; and as long as the endless evening lasted, she was tormented by remorse and scruples. She had already felt shame at having violated the secrecy of Albert's letter to Léopold; she had several times asked herself whether, if he knew of her crime, infamous inasmuch as it necessarily goes unpunished, the high-minded Albert could esteem her. Her conscience answered an uncompromising 'No.'

She had expiated her sin by self-imposed penances; she fasted, she mortified herself by remaining on her knees, her arms outstretched for hours, and repeating prayers all the time. She had compelled Mariette to similar acts of repentance; her passion was mingled with genuine asceticism, and was all the more dangerous.

'Shall I read that letter, shall I not?' she asked herself, while listening to the Chavoncourt girls. One was sixteen, the other seventeen and a half. Rosalie looked upon her two friends as mere children because they were not secretly in love.—'If I read it,' she finally decided, after hesitating for an hour between Yes and No, 'it shall, at any rate, be the last. Since I have gone so far as to see what he wrote to his friend, why should I not know what he says to *her*? If it is a horrible crime, is it not a proof of love? Oh, Albert! am I not your wife?'

When Rosalie was in bed she opened the letter, dated from day to day, so as to give the Duchess a faithful picture of Albert's life and feelings.

'*25th.*

'My dear Soul, all is well. To my other conquests I have just added an invaluable one: I have done a service to one of the most influential men who work the elections. Like the critics, who make other men's reputations but can never make their own, he makes deputies though he never can become one. The worthy man wanted to show his gratitude without loosening his purse-strings by saying to me, "Would you care to sit in the Chamber? I can get you returned as deputy."

'"If I ever made up my mind to enter on a political career," replied I hypocritically, "it would be to devote myself to the Comté, which I love, and where I am appreciated."

'"Well," he said, "we will persuade you, and through

you we shall have weight in the Chamber, for you will distinguish yourself there."

'And so, my beloved angel, say what you will, my perseverance will be rewarded. Ere long I shall, from the high place of the French Tribune, come before my country, before Europe. My name will be flung to you by the hundred voices of the French press.

'Yes, as you tell me, I was old when I came to Besançon, and Besançon has aged me more; but, like Sixtus v., I shall be young again the day after my election. I shall enter on my true life, my own sphere. Shall we not then stand in the same line? Count Savaron de Savarus, Ambassador I know not where, may surely marry a Princess Soderini, the widow of the Duc d'Argaiolo! Triumph restores the youth of men who have been preserved by incessant struggles. Oh, my Life! with what gladness did I fly from my library to my private room, to tell your portrait of this progress before writing to you! Yes, the votes I can command, those of the Vicar-General, of the persons I can oblige, and of this client, make my election already sure.

26th.

'We have entered on the twelfth year since that blest evening when, by a look, the beautiful Duchess sealed the promises made by the exile Francesca. You, dear, are thirty-two, I am thirty-five; the dear Duke is seventy-seven—that is to say, ten years more than yours and mine put together, and he still keeps well! My patience is almost as great as my love, and indeed I need a few years yet to rise to the level of your name. As you see, I am in good spirits to-day, I can laugh; that is the effect of hope. Sadness or gladness, it all comes to me through you. The hope of success always carries me back to the day following that on which I saw you for the first time, when my life became one with yours as the earth turns to the light. *Qual pianto* are these eleven years, for this is the 26th of December, the anniversary

of my arrival at your villa on the Lake of Geneva. For eleven years have I been crying to you, while you shine like a star set too high for man to reach it.

'*27th.*

'No, dearest, do not go to Milan; stay at Belgirate. Milan terrifies me. I do not like that odious Milanese fashion of chatting at the Scala every evening with a dozen persons, among whom it is hard if no one says something sweet. To me solitude is like the lump of amber in whose heart an insect lives for ever in unchanging beauty. Thus the heart and soul of a woman remain pure and unaltered in the form of their first youth. Is it the *Tedeschi* that you regret?

'*28th.*

'Is your statue never to be finished? I should wish to have you in marble, in painting, in miniature, in every possible form, to beguile my impatience. I still am waiting for the view of Belgirate from the south, and that of the balcony; these are all that I now lack. I am so extremely busy that to-day I can only write you nothing—but that nothing is everything. Was it not of nothing that God made the world? That nothing is a word, God's word: I love you!

'*30th.*

'Ah! I have received your journal. Thanks for your punctuality.—So you found great pleasure in seeing all the details of our first acquaintance thus set down? Alas! even while disguising them I was sorely afraid of offending you. We had no stories, and a *Review* without stories is a beauty without hair. Not being inventive by nature, and in sheer despair, I took the only poetry in my soul, the only adventure in my memory, and pitched it in the key in which it would bear telling; nor did I ever cease to think of you while writing the only literary production that will ever come from my heart, I cannot say from my pen. Did not the trans-

formation of your fierce Sormano into Gina make you laugh?

'You ask after my health. Well, it is better than in Paris. Though I work enormously, the peacefulness of the surroundings has its effect on the mind. What really tries and ages me, dear angel, is the anguish of mortified vanity, the perpetual friction of Paris life, the struggle of rival ambitions. This peace is a balm.

'If you could imagine the pleasure your letter gives me!—the long, kind letter in which you tell me the most trivial incidents of your life. No! you women can never know to what a degree a true lover is interested in these trifles. It was an immense pleasure to see the pattern of your new dress. Can it be a matter of indifference to me to know what you wear? If your lofty brow is knit? If our writers amuse you? If Canalis' songs delight you? I read the books you read. Even to your boating on the lake every incident touched me. Your letter is as lovely, as sweet as your soul! Oh! flower of heaven, perpetually adored, could I have lived without those dear letters, which for eleven years have upheld me in my difficult path like a light, like a perfume, like a steady chant, like some divine nourishment, like everything which can soothe and comfort life.

'Do not fail me! If you knew what anxiety I suffer the day before they are due, or the pain a day's delay can give me! Is she ill? Is *he*? I am midway between hell and paradise.

'*O mia cara diva*, keep up your music, exercise your voice, practise. I am enchanted with the coincidence of employments and hours by which, though separated by the Alps, we live by precisely the same rule. The thought charms me and gives me courage. The first time I undertook to plead here—I forgot to tell you this—I fanced that you were listening to me, and I suddenly felt the flash of inspiration which lifts the poet above mankind. If I am returned to the Chamber—oh! you

must come to Paris to be present at my first appearance there!

'30*th*, *Evening*.

'Good heavens, how I love you! Alas! I have intrusted too much to my love and my hopes. An accident which should sink that overloaded bark would end my life! For three years now I have not seen you, and at the thought of going to Belgirate my heart beats so wildly that I am forced to stop.—To see you, to hear that girlish caressing voice! To embrace in my gaze that ivory skin, glistening under the candlelight, and through which I can read your noble mind! To admire your fingers playing on the keys, to drink in your whole soul in a look, in the tone of an *Oimè* or an *Alberto*! To walk by the blossoming orange-trees, to live a few months in the bosom of that glorious scenery!—That is life. What folly it is to run after power, a name, fortune! But at Belgirate there is everything; there is poetry, there is glory! I ought to have made myself your steward, or, as that dear tyrant whom we cannot hate proposed to me, live there as *cavaliere servente*, only our passion was too fierce to allow of it.

'Farewell, my angel, forgive me my next fit of sadness in consideration of this cheerful mood; it has come as a beam of light from the torch of Hope, which has hitherto seemed to me a Will-o'-the-wisp.'

'How he loves her!' cried Rosalie, dropping the letter, which seemed heavy in her hand. 'After eleven years, to write like this!'

'Mariette,' said Mademoiselle de Watteville to her maid next morning, 'go and post this letter. Tell Jérôme that I know all I wished to know, and that he is to serve Monsieur Albert faithfully. We will confess our sins, you and I, without saying to whom the letters belonged, nor to whom they were going. I was in the wrong; I alone am guilty.'

'Mademoiselle has been crying?' said Mariette.

'Yes, but I do not want that my mother should perceive it; give me some very cold water.'

In the midst of the storms of her passion Rosalie often listened to the voice of conscience. Touched by the beautiful fidelity of these two hearts, she had just said her prayers, telling herself that there was nothing left to her but to be resigned, and to respect the happiness of two beings worthy of each other, submissive to fate, looking to God for everything, without allowing themselves any criminal acts or wishes. She felt a better woman, and had a certain sense of satisfaction after coming to this resolution, inspired by the natural rectitude of youth. And she was confirmed in it by a girl's idea: She was sacrificing herself for *him*.

'She does not know how to love,' thought she. 'Ah! if it were I—I would give up everything to a man who loved me so.—To be loved!—When, by whom shall I be loved? That little Monsieur de Soulas only loves my money; if I were poor, he would not even look at me.'

'Rosalie, my child, what are you thinking about? You are working beyond the outline,' said the Baroness to her daughter, who was making worsted-work slippers for the Baron.

Rosalie spent the winter of 1834-35 torn by secret tumults; but in the spring, in the month of April, when she reached the age of nineteen, she sometimes thought that it would be a fine thing to triumph over a Duchesse d'Argaiolo. In silence and solitude the prospect of this struggle had fanned her passion and her evil thoughts. She encouraged her romantic daring by making plan after plan. Although such characters are an exception, there are, unfortunately, too many Rosalies in the world, and this story contains a moral which ought to serve them as a warning.

In the course of this winter Albert de Savarus had quietly made considerable progress in Besançon. Confident of success, he now impatiently awaited the dissolution of the Chamber. Among the men of the moderate party he had won the suffrages of one of the makers of Besançon, a rich contractor, who had very wide influence.

Wherever they settled the Romans took immense pains, and spent enormous sums to have an unlimited supply of good water in every town of their empire. At Besançon they drank the water from Arcier, a hill at some considerable distance from Besançon. The town stands in a horseshoe circumscribed by the river Doubs. Thus, to restore an aqueduct in order to drink the same water that the Romans drank, in a town watered by the Doubs, is one of those absurdities which only succeed in a country place where the most exemplary gravity prevails. If this whim could be brought home to the hearts of the citizens, it would lead to considerable outlay, and this expenditure would benefit the influential contractor.

Albert Savaron de Savarus opined that the water of the river was good for nothing but to flow under a suspension bridge, and that the only drinkable water was that from Arcier. Articles were printed in the *Review* which merely expressed the views of the commercial interest of Besançon. The nobility and the citizens, the moderates and the legitimists, the government party and the opposition, everybody, in short, was agreed that they must drink the same water as the Romans, and boast of a suspension bridge. The question of the Arcier water was the order of the day at Besançon. At Besançon—as in the matter of the two railways to Versailles—as for every standing abuse—there were private interests unconfessed which gave vital force to this idea. The reasonable folk in opposition to this scheme, who were indeed but few, were regarded as old women. No one talked of anything but of Savaron's two projects. And

thus, after eighteen months of underground labour, the ambitious lawyer had succeeded in stirring to its depths the most stagnant town in France, the most unyielding to foreign influence, in finding the length of its foot, to use a vulgar phrase, and exerting a preponderant influence without stirring from his own room. He had solved the singular problem of how to be powerful without being popular.

In the course of this winter he won seven lawsuits for various priests of Besançon. At moments he could breathe freely at the thought of his coming triumph. This intense desire, which made him work so many interests and devise so many springs, absorbed the last strength of his terribly overstrung soul. His disinterestedness was lauded, and he took his clients' fees without comment. But this disinterestedness was, in truth, moral usury; he counted on a reward far greater to him than all the gold in the world.

In the month of October 1834 he had bought, ostensibly to serve a merchant who was in difficulties, with money lent him by Léopold Hannequin, a house which gave him a qualification for election. He had not seemed to seek or desire this advantageous bargain.

'You are really a remarkable man,' said the Abbé de Grancey, who, of course, had watched and understood the lawyer. The Vicar-General had come to introduce to him a Canon who needed his professional advice. 'You are a priest who has taken the wrong turning.' This observation struck Savarus.

Rosalie, on her part, had made up her mind, in her strong girl's head, to get Monsieur de Savarus into the drawing-room and acquainted with the society of the Hôtel de Rupt. So far she had limited her desires to seeing and hearing Albert. She had compounded, so to speak, and a composition is often no more than a truce.

Les Rouxey, the inherited estate of the Wattevilles, was worth just ten thousand francs a year; but in other

hands it would have yielded a great deal more. The Baron in his indifference—for his wife was to have, and in fact had, forty thousand francs a year—left the management of les Rouxey to a sort of factotum, an old servant of the Wattevilles named Modinier. Nevertheless, whenever the Baron and his wife wished to go out of the town, they went to les Rouxey, which is very picturesquely situated. The château and the park were, in fact, created by the famous Watteville, who in his active old age was passionately attached to this magnificent spot.

Between two precipitous hills—little peaks with bare summits known as the great and the little Rouxey—in the heart of a ravine where the torrents from the heights, with the Dent de Vilard at their head, come tumbling to join the lovely upper waters of the Doubs, Watteville had a huge dam constructed, leaving two cuttings for the overflow. Above this dam he made a beautiful lake, and below it two cascades; and these, uniting a few yards below the falls, formed a lovely little river to irrigate the barren, uncultivated valley, hitherto devastated by the torrent. This lake, this valley, and these two hills he enclosed in a ring fence, and built himself a retreat on the dam, which he widened to two acres by accumulating above it all the soil which had to be removed to make a channel for the river and the irrigation canals.

When the Baron de Watteville thus obtained the lake above his dam he was owner of the two hills, but not of the upper valley thus flooded, through which there had been at all times a right-of-way to where it ends in a horseshoe under the Dent de Vilard. But this ferocious old man was so widely dreaded, that so long as he lived no claim was urged by the inhabitants of Riceys, the little village on the further side of the Dent de Vilard. When the Baron died, he left the slopes of the two Rouxey hills joined by a strong wall, to protect

from inundation the two lateral valleys opening into the valley of Rouxey, to the right and left at the foot of the Dent de Vilard. Thus he died the master of the Dent de Vilard.

His heirs asserted their protectorate of the village of Riceys, and so maintained the usurpation. The old assassin, the old renegade, the old Abbé Watteville, ended his career by planting trees and making a fine road over the shoulder of one of the Rouxey hills to join the highroad. The estate belonging to this park and house was extensive, but badly cultivated; there were chalets on both hills and neglected forests of timber. It was all wild and deserted, left to the care of nature, abandoned to chance growths, but full of sublime and unexpected beauty. You may now imagine les Rouxey.

It is unnecessary to complicate this story by relating all the prodigious trouble and the inventiveness stamped with genius, by which Rosalie achieved her end without allowing it to be suspected. It is enough to say that it was in obedience to her mother that she left Besançon in the month of May 1835, in an antique travelling carriage drawn by a pair of sturdy hired horses, and accompanied her father to les Rouxey.

To a young girl love lurks in everything. When she rose, the morning after her arrival, Mademoiselle de Watteville saw from her bedroom window the fine expanse of water, from which the light mists rose like smoke, and were caught in the firs and larches, rolling up and along the hills till they reached the heights, and she gave a cry of admiration.

'They loved by the lakes! *She* lives by a lake! A lake is certainly full of love!' she thought.

A lake fed by snows has opalescent colours and a translucency that make it one huge diamond; but when it is shut in like that of les Rouxey, between two granite masses covered with pines, when silence broods

over it like that of the Savannahs or the Steppes, then every one must exclaim as Rosalie did.

'We owe that,' said her father, 'to the notorious Watteville.'

'On my word,' said the girl, 'he did his best to earn forgiveness. Let us go in a boat to the further end; it will give us an appetite for breakfast.'

The Baron called two gardener lads who knew how to row, and took with him his prime minister Modinier. The lake was about six acres in breadth, in some places ten or twelve, and four hundred in length. Rosalie soon found herself at the upper end shut in by the Dent de Vilard, the Jungfrau of that little Switzerland.

'Here we are, Monsieur le Baron,' said Modinier, signing to the gardeners to tie up the boat; 'will you come and look?'

'Look at what?' asked Rosalie.

'Oh, nothing!' exclaimed the Baron. 'But you are a sensible girl; we have some little secrets between us, and I may tell you what ruffles my mind. Some difficulties have arisen since 1830 between the village authorities of Riceys and me, on account of this very Dent de Vilard, and I want to settle the matter without your mother's knowing anything about it, for she is stubborn; she is capable of flinging fire and flames broadcast, particularly if she should hear that the Mayor of Riceys, a republican, got up this action as a sop to his people.'

Rosalie had presence of mind enough to disguise her delight, so as to work more effectually on her father.

'What action?' said she.

'Mademoiselle, the people of Riceys,' said Modinier, 'have long enjoyed the right of grazing and cutting fodder on their side of the Dent de Vilard. Now Monsieur Chantonnit, the Maire since 1830, declares that the whole Dent belongs to his district, and maintains that a hundred years ago, or more, there was a way

through our grounds. You understand that in that case we should no longer have them to ourselves. Then this barbarian would end by saying, what the old men in the village say, that the ground occupied by the lake was appropriated by the Abbé de Watteville. That would be the end of les Rouxey; what next?'

'Indeed, my child, between ourselves, it is the truth,' said Monsieur de Watteville simply. 'The land is an usurpation, with no title-deed but lapse of time. And, therefore, to avoid all worry, I should wish to come to a friendly understanding as to my border line on this side of the Dent de Vilard, and I will then raise a wall.'

'If you give way to the municipality, it will swallow you up. You ought to have threatened Riceys.'

'That is just what I told the master last evening,' said Modinier. 'But in confirmation of that view I proposed that he should come to see whether, on this side of the Dent or on the other, there may not be, high or low, some traces of an enclosure.'

For a century the Dent de Vilard had been used by both parties without coming to extremities; it stood as a sort of party wall between the communes of Riceys and les Rouxey, yielding little profit. Indeed, the object in dispute, being covered with snow for six months in the year, was of a nature to cool their ardour. Thus it required all the hot blast by which the revolution of 1830 inflamed the advocates of the people, to stir up this matter, by which Monsieur Chantonnit, the Maire of Riceys, hoped to give a dramatic turn to his career on the peaceful frontier of Switzerland, and to immortalise his term of office. Chantonnit, as his name shows, was a native of Neuchâtel.

'My dear father,' said Rosalie, as they got into the boat again, 'I agree with Modinier. If you wish to secure the joint possession of the Dent de Vilard, you must act with decision, and get a legal opinion which will protect you against this enterprising Chantonnit.

Why should you be afraid? Get the famous lawyer Savaron—engage him at once, lest Chantonnit should place the interests of the village in his hands. The man who won the case for the Chapter against the town can certainly win that of Watteville *versus* Riceys! Besides,' she added, 'les Rouxey will some day be mine—not for a long time yet, I trust.—Well, then, do not leave me with a lawsuit on my hands. I like this place; I shall often live here, and add to it as much as possible. On those banks,' and she pointed to the feet of the two hills, 'I shall cut flower-beds and make the loveliest English gardens.—Let us go to Besançon and bring back with us the Abbé de Grancey, Monsieur Savaron, and my mother, if she cares to come. You can then make up your mind; but in your place I should have done so already. Your name is Watteville, and you are afraid of a fight! If you should lose your case—well, I will never reproach you by a word!

'Oh, if that is the way you take it,' said the Baron, 'I am quite ready; I will see the lawyer.'

'Besides, a lawsuit is really great fun. It brings some interest into life, with coming and going and raging over it. You will have a great deal to do before you can get hold of the judges.—We did not see the Abbé de Grancey for three weeks, he was so busy!'

'But the very existence of the Chapter was involved,' said Monsieur de Watteville; 'and then the Archbishop's pride, his conscience, everything that makes up the life of the priesthood, was at stake. That Savaron does not know what he did for the Chapter! He saved it!'

'Listen to me,' said his daughter in his ear, 'if you secure Monsieur de Savaron, you will gain your suit, won't you? Well, then, let me advise you. You cannot get at Monsieur Savaron excepting through Monsieur de Grancey. Take my word for it, and let us together talk to the dear Abbé without my mother's presence at

the interview, for I know a way of persuading him to bring the lawyer to us.'

'It will be very difficult to avoid mentioning it to your mother!'

'The Abbé de Grancey will settle that afterwards. But just make up your mind to promise your vote to Monsieur Savaron at the next election, and you will see!'

'Go to the election! take the oath?' cried the Baron de Watteville.

'What then!' said she.

'And what will your mother say?'

'She may even desire you to do it,' replied Rosalie, knowing as she did from Albert's letter to Léopold how deeply the Vicar-General had pledged himself.

Four days after, the Abbé de Grancey called very early one morning on Albert de Savarus, having announced his visit the day before. The old priest had come to win over the great lawyer to the house of the Wattevilles, a proceeding which shows how much tact and subtlety Rosalie must have employed in an underhand way.

'What can I do for you, Monsieur le Vicaire-Général?' asked Savarus.

The Abbé, who told his story with admirable frankness, was coldly heard by Albert.

'Monsieur l'Abbé,' said he, 'it is out of the question that I should defend the interests of the Wattevilles, and you shall understand why. My part in this town is to remain perfectly neutral. I will display no colours; I must remain a mystery till the eve of my election. Now, to plead for the Wattevilles would mean nothing in Paris, but here!—Here, where everything is discussed, I should be supposed by every one to be an ally of your Faubourg Saint-Germain.'

'What! do you suppose that you can remain unknown on the day of the election, when the candidates must

oppose each other? It must then become known that your name is Savaron de Savarus, that you have held the appointment of Master of Appeals, that you are a man of the Restoration!'

'On the day of the election,' said Savarus, 'I will be all I am expected to be; and I intend to speak at the preliminary meetings.'

'If you have the support of Monsieur de Watteville and his party, you will get a hundred votes in a mass, and far more to be trusted than those on which you rely. It is always possible to produce division of interests; convictions are inseparable.'

'The deuce is in it!' said Savarus. 'I am attached to you, and I could do a great deal for you, Father! Perhaps we may compound with the Devil. Whatever Monsieur de Watteville's business may be, by engaging Girardet, and prompting him, it will be possible to drag the proceedings out till the elections are over. I will not undertake to plead till the day after I am returned.'

'Do this one thing,' said the Abbé. 'Come to the Hôtel de Rupt: there is a young person of nineteen there who, one of these days, will have a hundred thousand francs a year, and you can seem to be paying your court to her——'

'Ah! the young lady I sometimes see in the kiosk?'

'Yes, Mademoiselle Rosalie,' replied the Abbé de Grancey. 'You are ambitious. If she takes a fancy to you, you may be everything an ambitious man can wish —who knows? A Minister perhaps. A man can always be a Minister who adds a hundred thousand francs a year to your amazing talents.'

'Monsieur l'Abbé, if Mademoiselle de Watteville had three times her fortune, and adored me into the bargain, it would be impossible that I should marry her——'

'You are married?' exclaimed the Abbé.

'Not in church nor before the Maire, but morally speaking,' said Savarus.

'That is even worse when a man cares about it as you seem to care,' replied the Abbé. 'Everything that is not done, can be undone. Do not stake your fortune and your prospects on a woman's liking, any more than a wise man counts on a dead man's shoes before starting on his way.'

'Let us say no more about Mademoiselle de Watteville,' said Albert gravely, 'and agree as to the facts. At your desire—for I have a regard and respect for you—I will appear for Monsieur de Watteville, but after the elections. Until then Girardet must conduct the case under my instructions. That is the utmost I can do.'

'But there are questions involved which can only be settled after inspection of the localities,' said the Vicar-General.

'Girardet can go,' said Savarus. 'I cannot allow myself, in the face of a town I know so well, to take any step which might compromise the supreme interests that lie beyond my election.'

The Abbé left Savarus after giving him a keen look, in which he seemed to be laughing at the young athlete's uncompromising politics, while admiring his firmness.

'Ah! I would have dragged my father into a lawsuit —I would have done anything to get him here!' cried Rosalie to herself, standing in the kiosk and looking at the lawyer in his room, the day after Albert's interview with the Abbé, who had reported the result to her father. 'I would have committed any mortal sin, and you will not enter the Wattevilles' drawing-room; I may not hear your fine voice! You make conditions when your help is required by the Wattevilles and the Rupts! —Well, God knows, I meant to be content with these small joys; with seeing you, hearing you speak, going with you to les Rouxey, that your presence might to me make the place sacred. That was all I asked. But now—now I mean to be your wife.—Yes, yes; look

at *her* portrait, at *her* drawing-room, *her* bedroom, at the four sides of *her* villa, the points of view from *her* gardens. You expect her statue? I will make her marble herself towards you!—After all, the woman does not love. Art, science, books, singing, music, have absorbed half her senses and her intelligence. She is old, too; she is past thirty; my Albert will not be happy!'

'What is the matter that you stay here, Rosalie?' asked her mother, interrupting her reflections. 'Monsieur de Soulas is in the drawing-room, and he observed your attitude, which certainly betrays more thoughtfulness than is due at your age.'

'Then, is Monsieur de Soulas a foe to thought?' asked Rosalie.

'Then you were thinking?' said Madame de Watteville.

'Why, yes, mamma.'

'Why, no! you were not thinking. You were staring at that lawyer's window with an attention that is neither becoming nor decent, and which Monsieur de Soulas, of all men, ought never to have observed.'

'Why?' said Rosalie.

'It is time,' said the Baroness, 'that you should know what our intentions are. Amédée likes you, and you will not be unhappy as Comtesse de Soulas.'

Rosalie, as white as a lily, made no reply, so completely was she stupefied by contending feelings. And yet, in the presence of the man she had this instant begun to hate vehemently, she forced the kind of smile which a ballet-dancer puts on for the public. Nay, she could even laugh; she had the strength to conceal her rage, which presently subsided, for she was determined to make use of this fat simpleton to further her designs.

'Monsieur Amédée,' said she, at a moment when her mother was walking ahead of them in the garden, affecting to leave the young people together, 'were you not

aware that Monsieur Albert Savaron de Savarus is a Legitimist?'

'A Legitimist?'

'Until 1830 he was Master of Appeals to the Council of State, attached to the supreme Ministerial Council, and in favour with the Dauphin and Dauphiness. It would be very good of you to say nothing against him, but it would be better still if you would attend the election this year, carry the day, and hinder that poor Monsieur de Chavoncourt from representing the town of Besançon.'

'What sudden interest have you in this Savaron?'

'Monsieur Albert Savaron de Savarus, the natural son of the Comte de Savarus—pray keep the secret of my indiscretion—if he is returned deputy, will be our advocate in the suit about les Rouxey. Les Rouxey, my father tells me, will be my property; I intend to live there, it is a lovely place! I should be broken-hearted at seeing that fine piece of the great de Watteville's work destroyed.'

'The devil!' thought Amédée, as he left the house. 'The heiress is not such a fool as her mother thinks her.'

Monsieur de Chavoncourt is a Royalist, of the famous 221. Hence, from the day after the revolution of July, he always preached the salutary doctrine of taking the oaths and resisting the present order of things, after the pattern of the Tories against the Whigs in England. This doctrine was not acceptable to the Legitimists, who, in their defeat, had the wit to divide in their opinions, and to trust to the force of inertia and to Providence. Monsieur de Chavoncourt was not wholly trusted by his own party, but seemed to the Moderates the best man to choose; they preferred the triumph of his half-hearted opinions to the acclamation of a Republican who should combine the votes of the enthusiasts and the patriots.

Monsieur de Chavoncourt, highly respected in Besançon, was the representative of an old parliamentary family; his fortune, of about fifteen thousand francs a year, was

not an offence to anybody, especially as he had a son and three daughters. With such a family, fifteen thousand francs a year are a mere nothing. Now when, under these circumstances, the father of the family is above bribery, it would be hard if the electors did not esteem him. Electors wax enthusiastic over a *beau ideal* of parliamentary virtue, just as the audience in the pit do at the representation of the generous sentiments they so little practise.

Madame de Chavoncourt, at this time a woman of forty, was one of the beauties of Besançon. While the Chamber was sitting, she lived meagrely in one of their country places to recoup herself by economy for Monsieur de Chavoncourt's expenses in Paris. In the winter she received very creditably once a week, on Tuesdays, understanding her business as mistress of the house. Young Chavoncourt, a youth of two-and-twenty, and another young gentleman, named Monsieur de Vauchelles, no richer than Amédée and his school-friend, were his intimate allies. They made excursions together to Granvelle, and sometimes went out shooting; they were so well known to be inseparable that they were invited to the country together.

Rosalie, who was intimate with the Chavoncourt girls, knew that the three young men had no secrets from each other. She reflected that if Monsieur de Soulas should repeat her words, it would be to his two companions. Now, Monsieur de Vauchelles had his matrimonial plans, as Amédée had his; he wished to marry Victoire, the eldest of the Chavoncourts, on whom an old aunt was to settle an estate worth seven thousand francs a year, and a hundred thousand francs in hard cash, when the contract should be signed. Victoire was this aunt's god-daughter and favourite niece. Consequently, young Chavoncourt and his friend Vauchelles would be sure to warn Monsieur de Chavoncourt of the danger he was in from Albert's candidature.

But this did not satisfy Rosalie. She sent the Prefét of the department a letter written with her left hand, signed '*A friend to Louis Philippe*,' in which she informed him of the secret intentions of Monsieur Albert de Savarus, pointing out the serious support a Royalist orator might give to Berryer, and revealing to him the deeply artful course pursued by the lawyer during his two years' residence at Besançon. The Préfet was a capable man, a personal enemy of the Royalist party, devoted by conviction to the Government of July—in short, one of those men of whom, in the Rue de Grenelle, the Minister of the Interior could say, 'We have a capital Préfet at Besançon.'—The Préfet read the letter, and, in obedience to its instructions, he burnt it.

Rosalie aimed at preventing Albert's election, so as to keep him five years longer at Besançon.

At that time an election was a fight between parties, and in order to win, the Ministry chose its ground by choosing the moment when it would give battle. The elections were therefore not to take place for three months yet. When a man's whole life depends on an election, the period that elapses between the issuing of the writs for convening the electoral bodies, and the day fixed for their meetings, is an interval during which ordinary vitality is suspended. Rosalie fully understood how much latitude Albert's absorbed state would leave her during these three months. By promising Mariette —as she afterwards confessed—to take both her and Jérôme into her service, she induced the maid to bring her all the letters Albert might send to Italy, and those addressed to him from that country. And all the time she was pondering these machinations, the extraordinary girl was working slippers for her father with the most innocent air in the world. She even made a greater display than ever of candour and simplicity, quite understanding how valuable that candour and innocence would be to her ends.

'My daughter grows quite charming!' said Madame de Watteville.

Two months before the election a meeting was held at the house of Monsieur Boucher senior, composed of the contractor who expected to get the work for the aqueduct for the Arcier waters; of Monsieur Boucher's father-in-law; of Monsieur Granet, the influential man to whom Savarus had done a service, and who was to nominate him as a candidate; of Girardet the lawyer; of the printer of the *Eastern Review*; and of the President of the Chamber of Commerce. In fact, the assembly consisted of twenty-seven persons in all, men who in the provinces are regarded as bigwigs. Each man represented on an average six votes, but in estimating their value they said ten, for men always begin by exaggerating their own influence. Among these twenty-seven was one who was wholly devoted to the Préfet, one false brother who secretly looked for some favour from the Ministry, either for himself or for some one belonging to him.

At this preliminary meeting, it was agreed that Savaron the lawyer should be named as candidate, a motion received with such enthusiasm as no one looked for from Besançon. Albert, waiting at home for Alfred Boucher to fetch him, was chatting with the Abbé de Grancey, who was interested in this absorbing ambition. Albert had appreciated the priest's vast political capacities; and the priest, touched by the young man's entreaties, had been willing to become his guide and adviser in this culminating struggle. The Chapter did not love Monsieur de Chavoncourt, for it was his wife's brother-in-law, as President of the Tribunal, who had lost the famous suit for them in the lower Court.

'You are betrayed, my dear fellow,' said the shrewd and worthy Abbé, in that gentle, calm voice which old priests acquire.

'Betrayed!' cried the lover, struck to the heart.

'By whom I know not at all,' the priest replied. 'But at the Préfecture your plans are known, and your hand read like a book. At this moment I have no advice to give you. Such affairs need consideration. As for this evening, take the bull by the horns, anticipate the blow. Tell them all your previous life, and thus you will mitigate the effect of the discovery on the good folks of Besançon.'

'Oh, I was prepared for it,' said Albert in a broken voice.

'You would not benefit by my advice; you had the opportunity of making an impression at the Hôtel de Rupt; you do not know the advantage you would have gained——'

'What?'

'The unanimous support of the Royalists, an immediate readiness to go to the election—in short, above a hundred votes. Adding to these what, among ourselves, we call the ecclesiastical vote, though you were not yet nominated, you were master of the votes by ballot. Under such circumstances, a man may temporise, may make his way——'

Alfred Boucher when he came in, full of enthusiasm, to announce the decision of the preliminary meeting, found the Vicar-General and the lawyer cold, calm, and grave.

'Good night, Monsieur l'Abbé,' said Albert. 'We will talk of your business at greater length when the elections are over.'

And he took Alfred's arm, after pressing Monsieur de Grancey's hand with meaning. The priest looked at the ambitious man, whose face at that moment wore the lofty expression which a general may have when he hears the first gun fired for a battle. He raised his eyes to heaven, and left the room, saying to himself, 'What a priest he would make!'

Eloquence is not at the Bar. The pleader rarely puts

forth the real powers of his soul; if he did, he would die of it in a few years. Eloquence is, nowadays, rarely in the pulpit; but it is found on certain occasions in the Chamber of Deputies, when an ambitious man stakes all to win all, or, stung by a myriad darts, at a given moment bursts into speech. But it is still more certainly found in some privileged beings, at the inevitable hour when their claims must either triumph or be wrecked, and when they are forced to speak. Thus at this meeting, Albert Savarus, feeling the necessity of winning himself some supporters, displayed all the faculties of his soul and the resources of his intellect. He entered the room well, without awkwardness or arrogance, without weakness, without cowardice, quite gravely, and was not dismayed at finding himself among twenty or thirty men. The news of the meeting and of its determination had already brought a few docile sheep to follow the bell.

Before listening to Monsieur Boucher, who was about to deluge him with a speech announcing the decision of the Boucher Committee, Albert begged for silence, and, as he shook hands with Monsieur Boucher, tried to warn him, by a sign, of an unexpected danger.

'My young friend, Alfred Boucher, has just announced to me the honour you have done me. But before that decision is irrevocable,' said the lawyer, 'I think that I ought to explain to you who and what your candidate is, so as to leave you free to take back your word if my declarations should disturb your conscience!'

This exordium was followed by profound silence. Some of the men thought it showed a noble impulse.

Albert gave a sketch of his previous career, telling them his real name, his action under the Restoration, and revealing himself as a new man since his arrival at Besançon, while pledging himself for the future. This address held his hearers breathless, it was said. These men, all with different interests, were spellbound by the brilliant eloquence that flowed at boiling heat from

the heart and soul of this ambitious spirit. Admiration silenced reflection. Only one thing was clear—the thing which Albert wished to get into their heads—

Was it not far better for the town to have one of those men who are born to govern society at large than a mere voting-machine? A statesman carries power with him. A commonplace deputy, however incorruptible, is but a conscience. What a glory for Provence to have found a Mirabeau, to return the only statesman since 1830 that the revolution of July had produced!

Under the pressure of this eloquence, all the audience believed it great enough to become a splendid political instrument in the hands of their representative. They all saw in Albert Savaron, Savarus the great Minister. And, reading the secret calculations of his constituents, the clever candidate gave them to understand that they would be the first to enjoy the right of profiting by his influence.

This confession of faith, this ambitious programme, this retrospect of his life and character was, according to the only man present who was capable of judging of Savarus (he has since become one of the leading men of Besançon), a masterpiece of skill and of feeling, of fervour, interest, and fascination. This whirlwind carried away the electors. Never had any man had such a triumph. But, unfortunately, speech, a weapon only for close warfare, has only an immediate effect. Reflection kills the word when the word ceases to overpower reflection. If the votes had then been taken, Albert's name would undoubtedly have come out of the ballot-box. At the moment, he was conqueror. But he must conquer every day for two months.

Albert went home quivering. The townsfolk had applauded him, and he had achieved the great point of silencing beforehand the malignant talk to which his early career might give rise. The commercial interest

of Besançon had nominated the lawyer, Albert Savaron de Savarus, as its candidate.

Alfred Boucher's enthusiasm, at first infectious, presently became blundering.

The Préfet, alarmed by this success, set to work to count the Ministerial votes, and contrived to have a secret interview with Monsieur de Chavoncourt, so as to effect a coalition in their common interests. Every day, without Albert's being able to discover how, the voters in the Boucher committee diminished in number.

Nothing could resist the slow grinding of the Préfecture. Three or four clever men would say to Albert's clients, 'Will the deputy defend you and win your lawsuits? Will he give you advice, draw up your contracts, arrange your compromises?—He will be your slave for five years longer, if, instead of returning him to the Chamber, you only hold out the hope of his going there five years hence.'

This calculation did Savarus all the more mischief, because the wives of some of the merchants had already made it. The parties interested in the matter of the bridge and that of the water from Arcier could not hold out against a talking-to from a clever Ministerialist, who proved to them that their safety lay at the Préfecture, and not in the hands of an ambitious man. Each day was a check for Savarus, though each day the battle was led by him and fought by his lieutenants—a battle of words, speeches, and proceedings. He dared not go to the Vicar-General, and the Vicar-General never showed himself. Albert rose and went to bed in a fever, his brain on fire.

At last the day dawned of the first struggle, practically the show of hands; the votes are counted, the candidates estimate their chances, and clever men can prophesy their failure or success. It is a decent hustings, without the mob, but formidable; agitation, though it is not allowed any physical display, as it is in England, is not the less profound. The English fight these battles with

their fists, the French with hard words. Our neighbours have a scrimmage, the French try their fate by cold combinations calmly worked out. This particular political business is carried out in opposition to the character of the two nations.

The Radical party named their candidate; Monsieur de Chavoncourt came forward; then Albert appeared, and was accused by the Chavoncourt committee and the Radicals of being an uncompromising man of the Right, a second Berryer. The Ministry had their candidate, a stalking-horse, useful only to receive the purely Ministerial votes. The votes, thus divided, gave no result. The Republican candidate had twenty, the Ministry got fifty, Albert had seventy, Monsieur de Chavoncourt obtained sixty-seven. But the Préfet's party had perfidiously made thirty of its most devoted adherents vote for Albert, so as to deceive the enemy. The votes for Monsieur de Chavoncourt, added to the eighty votes—the real number—at the disposal of the Préfecture would carry the election, if only the Préfet could succeed in gaining over a few of the Radicals. A hundred and sixty votes were not recorded: those of Monsieur de Grancey's following and the Legitimists.

The show of hands at an election, like a dress rehearsal at a theatre, is the most deceptive thing in the world. Albert Savarus came home, putting a brave face on the matter, but half dead. He had had the wit, the genius, or the good luck to gain, within the last fortnight, two staunch supporters—Girardet's father-in-law and a very shrewd old merchant to whom Monsieur de Grancey had sent him. These two worthy men, his self-appointed spies, affected to be Albert's most ardent opponents in the hostile camp. Towards the end of the show of hands they informed Savarus, through the medium of Monsieur Boucher, that thirty voters, unknown, were working against him in his party, playing the same trick that they were playing for his benefit on the other side.

A criminal marching to execution could not suffer as Albert suffered as he went home from the hall where his fate was at stake. The despairing lover could endure no companionship. He walked through the streets alone, between eleven o'clock and midnight. At one in the morning, Albert, to whom sleep had been unknown for the past three days, was sitting in his library in a deep armchair, his face as pale as if he were dying, his hands hanging limp, in a forlorn attitude worthy of the Magdalen. Tears hung on his long lashes, tears that dim the eyes, but do not fall; fierce thought drinks them up, the fire of the soul consumes them. Alone, he might weep. And then, under the kiosk, he saw a white figure, which reminded him of Francesca.

'And for three months I have had no letter from her! What has become of her? I have not written for two months, but I warned her. Is she ill? Oh my love! My life! Will you ever know what I have gone through? What a wretched constitution is mine! Have I an aneurism?' he asked himself, feeling his heart beat so violently that its pulses seemed audible in the silence like little grains of sand dropping on a big drum.

At this moment three distinct taps sounded on his door; Albert hastened to open it, and almost fainted with joy at seeing the Vicar-General's cheerful and triumphant mien. Without a word, he threw his arms round the Abbé de Grancey, held him fast, and clasped him closely, letting his head fall on the old man's shoulder. He was a child again; he cried as he had cried on hearing that Francesca Soderini was a married woman. He betrayed his weakness to no one but to this priest, on whose face shone the light of hope. The priest had been sublime, and as shrewd as he was sublime.

'Forgive me, dear Abbé, but you come at one of those moments when the man vanishes, for you are not to think me vulgarly ambitious.'

'Oh! I know,' replied the Abbé. 'You wrote '*Ambition for love's sake!*'—Ah! my son, it was love in despair that made me a priest in 1786, at the age of two-and-twenty. In 1788 I was in charge of a parish. I know life.—I have refused three bishoprics already; I mean to die at Besançon.'

'Come and see her!' cried Savarus, seizing a candle, and leading the Abbé into the handsome room where hung the portrait of the Duchesse d'Argaiolo, which he lighted up.

'She is one of those women who are born to reign!' said the Vicar-General, understanding how great an affection Albert showed him by this mark of confidence. 'But there is pride on that brow; it is implacable; she would never forgive an insult! It is the Archangel Michael, the angel of execution, the inexorable angel—"All or nothing" is the motto of this type of angel. There is something divinely pitiless in that head.'

'You have guessed well,' cried Savarus. 'But, my dear Abbé, for more than twelve years now she has reigned over my life, and I have not a thought for which to blame myself——'

'Ah! if you could only say the same of God!' said the priest with simplicity. 'Now, to talk of your affairs. For ten days I have been at work for you. If you are a real politician, this time you will follow my advice. You would not be where you are now if you would have gone to the Wattevilles when I first told you. But you must go there to-morrow; I will take you in the evening The Rouxey estates are in danger; the case must be defended within three days. The election will not be over in three days. They will take good care not to appoint examiners the first day. There will be several voting days, and you will be elected by ballot——'

'How can that be?' asked Savarus.

'By winning the Rouxey lawsuit you will gain eighty

Legitimist votes; add them to the thirty I can command, and you have a hundred and ten. Then, as twenty remain to you of the Boucher committee, you will have a hundred and thirty in all.'

'Well,' said Albert, 'we must get seventy-five more.'

'Yes,' said the priest, 'since all the rest are Ministerial. But, my son, you have two hundred votes, and the Préfecture no more than a hundred and eighty.'

'I have two hundred votes?' said Albert, standing stupid with amazement, after starting to his feet as if shot up by a spring.

'You have those of Monsieur de Chavoncourt,' said the Abbé.

'How?' said Albert.

'You will marry Mademoiselle Sidonie de Chavoncourt.'

'Never!'

'You will marry Mademoiselle Sidonie de Chavoncourt,' the priest repeated coldly.

'But you see—she is inexorable,' said Albert, pointing to Francesca.

'You will marry Mademoiselle Sidonie de Chavoncourt,' said the Abbé calmly for the third time.

This time Albert understood. The Vicar-General would not be implicated in the scheme which at last smiled on the despairing politician. A word more would have compromised the priest's dignity and honour.

'To-morrow evening at the Hôtel de Rupt you will meet Madame de Chavoncourt and her second daughter. You can thank her beforehand for what she is going to do for you, and tell her that your gratitude is unbounded, that you are hers body and soul, that henceforth your future is that of her family. You are quite disinterested, for you have so much confidence in yourself that you regard the nomination as deputy as a sufficient fortune.

'You will have a struggle with Madame de Chavon-

court; she will want you to pledge your word. All your future life, my son, lies in that evening. But, understand clearly, I have nothing to do with it. I am answerable only for the Legitimist voters; I have secured Madame de Watteville, and that means all the aristocracy of Besançon. Amédée de Soulas and Vauchelles, who will both vote for you, have won over the young men; Madame de Watteville will get the old ones. As to my electors, they are infallible.'

'And who on earth has gained over Madame de Chavoncourt?' asked Savarus.

'Ask me no questions,' replied the Abbé. 'Monsieur de Chavoncourt, who has three daughters to marry, is not capable of increasing his wealth. Though Vauchelles marries the eldest without anything from her father, because her old aunt is to settle something on her, what is to become of the two others? Sidonie is sixteen, and your ambition is as good as a gold mine. Some one has told Madame de Chavoncourt that she will do better by getting her daughter married than by sending her husband to waste his money in Paris. That some one manages Madame de Chavoncourt, and Madame de Chavoncourt manages her husband.'

'That is enough, my dear Abbé. I understand. When once I am returned as deputy, I have somebody's fortune to make, and by making it large enough I shall be released from my promise. In me you have a son, a man who will owe his happiness to you. Great Heavens! what have I done to deserve so true a friend?'

'You won a triumph for the Chapter,' said the Vicar-General, smiling. 'Now, as to all this, be as secret as the tomb. We are nothing, we have done nothing. If we were known to have meddled in election matters, we should be eaten up alive by the Puritans of the Left—who do worse—and blamed by some of our own party, who want everything. Madame de Chavoncourt has no suspicion of my share in all this. I have confided in no

one but Madame de Watteville, whom we may trust as we trust ourselves.'

'I will bring the Duchess to you to be blessed!' cried Savarus.

After seeing out the old priest, Albert went to bed in the swaddling clothes of power.

Next evening, as may well be supposed, by nine o'clock Madame la Baronne de Watteville's rooms were crowded by the aristocracy of Besançon in convocation extraordinary. They were discussing the exceptional step of going to the poll, to oblige the daughter of the de Rupts. It was known that the former Master of Appeals, the secretary of one of the most faithful ministers under the Elder Branch, was to be presented that evening. Madame de Chavoncourt was there with her second daughter Sidonie, exquisitely dressed, while her elder sister, secure of her lover, had not indulged in any of the arts of the toilet. In country towns these little things are remarked. The Abbé de Grancey's fine and clever head was to be seen moving from group to group, listening to everything, seeming to be apart from it all, but uttering those incisive phrases which sum up a question and direct the issue.

'If the Elder Branch were to return,' said he to an old statesman of seventy, 'what politicians would they find?' —'Berryer, alone on his bench, does not know which way to turn; if he had sixty votes, he would often scotch the wheels of the Government and upset Ministries!'— 'The Duc de Fitz-James is to be nominated at Toulouse.' —'You will enable Monsieur de Watteville to win his lawsuit.'—'If you vote for Monsieur Savarus, the Republicans will vote with you rather than with the Moderates!' etc. etc.

At nine o'clock Albert had not arrived. Madame de Watteville was disposed to regard such delay as an impertinence.

'My dear Baroness,' said Madame de Chavoncourt, 'do not let such serious issues turn on such a trifle. The varnish on his boots is not dry—or a consultation, perhaps, detains Monsieur de Savarus.'

Rosalie shot a side glance at Madame de Chavoncourt.

'She is very lenient to Monsieur de Savarus,' she whispered to her mother.

'You see,' said the Baroness with a smile, 'there is a question of a marriage between Sidonie and Monsieur de Savarus.'

Mademoiselle de Watteville hastily went to a window looking out over the garden.

At ten o'clock Albert de Savarus had not yet appeared. The storm that threatened now burst. Some of the gentlemen sat down to cards, finding the thing intolerable. The Abbé de Grancey, who did not know what to think, went to the window where Rosalie was hidden, and exclaimed aloud in his amazement, 'He must be dead!'

The Vicar-General stepped out into the garden, followed by Monsieur de Watteville and his daughter, and they all three went up to the kiosk. In Albert's rooms all was dark; not a light was to be seen.

'Jérôme!' cried Rosalie, seeing the servant in the yard below. The Abbé looked at her with astonishment. 'Where in the world is your master?' she asked the man, who came to the foot of the wall.

'Gone—in a post-chaise, Mademoiselle.'

'He is ruined!' exclaimed the Abbé de Grancey, 'or he is happy!'

The joy of triumph was not so effectually concealed on Rosalie's face that the Vicar-General could not detect it. He affected to see nothing.

'What can this girl have had to do with this business?' he asked himself.

They all three returned to the drawing-room, where

Monsieur de Watteville announced the strange, the extraordinary, the prodigious news of the lawyer's departure, without any reason assigned for his evasion. By half-past eleven only fifteen persons remained, among them Madame de Chavoncourt and the Abbé de Godenars, another Vicar-General, a man of about forty, who hoped for a bishopric, the two Chavoncourt girls, and Monsieur de Vauchelles, the Abbé de Grancey, Rosalie, Amédée de Soulas, and a retired magistrate, one of the most influential members of the upper circle of Besançon, who had been very eager for Albert's election. The Abbé de Grancey sat down by the Baroness in such a position as to watch Rosalie, whose face, usually pale, wore a feverish flush.

'What can have happened to Monsieur de Savarus?' said Madame de Chavoncourt.

At this moment a servant in livery brought in a letter for the Abbé de Grancey on a silver tray.

'Pray read it,' said the Baroness.

The Vicar-General read the letter; he saw Rosalie suddenly turn as white as her kerchief.

'She recognises the writing,' said he to himself, after glancing at the girl over his spectacles. He folded up the letter, and calmly put it in his pocket without a word. In three minutes he had met three looks from Rosalie which were enough to make him guess everything.

'She is in love with Albert Savarus!' thought the Vicar-General.

He rose and took leave. He was going towards the door when, in the next room, he was overtaken by Rosalie, who said—

'Monsieur de Grancey, it was from Albert!'

'How do you know that it was his writing, to recognise it from so far?'

The girl's reply, caught as she was in the toils of her impatience and rage, seemed to the Abbé sublime.

'I love him!—What is the matter?' she said after a pause.

'He gives up the election.'

Rosalie put her finger to her lip.

'I ask you to be as secret as if it were a confession,' said she before returning to the drawing-room. 'If there is an end of the election, there is an end of the marriage with Sidonie.'

In the morning, on her way to Mass, Mademoiselle de Watteville heard from Mariette some of the circumstances which had prompted Albert's disappearance at the most critical moment of his life.

'Mademoiselle, an old gentleman from Paris arrived yesterday morning at the Hôtel National; he came in his own carriage with four horses, and a courier in front, and a servant. Indeed, Jérôme, who saw the carriage returning, declares he could only be a prince or a *milord*.'

'Was there a coronet on the carriage?' asked Rosalie.

'I do not know,' said Mariette. 'Just as two was striking he came to call on Monsieur Savarus, and sent in his card; and when he saw it, Jérôme says Monsieur turned as pale as a sheet, and said he was to be shown in. As he himself locked the door, it is impossible to tell what the old gentleman and the lawyer said to each other; but they were together above an hour, and then the old gentleman, with the lawyer, called up his servant. Jérôme saw the servant go out again with an immense package, four feet long, which looked like a great painting on canvas. The old gentleman had in his hand a large parcel of papers. Monsieur Savaron was paler than death, and he, so proud, so dignified, was in a state to be pitied. But he treated the old gentleman so respectfully that he could not have been politer to the King himself. Jérôme and Monsieur Albert Savaron escorted the gentleman to his carriage, which was stand-

ing with the horses in. The courier started on the stroke of three.

'Monsieur Savaron went straight to the Préfecture, and from that to Monsieur Gentillet, who sold him the old travelling carriage that used to belong to Madame de Saint-Vier before she died; then he ordered post-horses for six o'clock. He went home to pack; no doubt he wrote a lot of letters; finally, he settled everything with Monsieur Girardet, who went to him and stayed till seven. Jérôme carried a note to Monsieur Boucher, with whom his master was to have dined; and then, at half-past seven, the lawyer set out, leaving Jérôme with three months' wages, and telling him to find another place.

'He left his keys with Monsieur Girardet, whom he took home, and at his house, Jérôme says, he took a plate of soup, for at half-past seven Monsieur Girardet had not yet dined. When Monsieur Savaron got into the carriage again he looked like death. Jérôme, who, of course, saw his master off, heard him tell the postillion "The Geneva Road!"'

'Did Jérôme ask the name of the stranger at the Hôtel National?'

'As the old gentleman did not mean to stay, he was not asked for it. The servant, by his orders no doubt, pretended not to speak French.'

'And the letter which came so late to the Abbé de Grancey?' said Rosalie.

'It was Monsieur Girardet, no doubt, who ought to have delivered it; but Jérôme says that poor Monsieur Girardet, who was much attached to lawyer Savaron, was as much upset as he was. So he who came so mysteriously, as Mademoiselle Galard says, is gone away just as mysteriously.'

After hearing this narrative, Mademoiselle de Watteville fell into a brooding and absent mood, which everybody could see. It is useless to say anything of the

commotion that arose in Besançon on the disappearance of Monsieur Savaron. It was understood that the Préfect had obliged him with the greatest readiness by giving him at once a passport across the frontier, for he was thus quit of his only opponent. Next day Monsieur de Chavoncourt was carried to the top by a majority of a hundred and forty votes.

'Jack is gone by the way he came,' said an elector on hearing of Albert Savaron's flight.

This event lent weight to the prevailing prejudice at Besançon against strangers; indeed, two years previously they had received confirmation from the affair of the Republican newspaper. Ten days later Albert de Savarus was never spoken of again. Only three persons—Girardet the attorney, the Vicar-General, and Rosalie—were seriously affected by his disappearance. Girardet knew that the white-haired stranger was Prince Soderini, for he had seen his card, and he told the Vicar-General; but Rosalie, better informed than either of them, had known for three months past that the Duc d'Argaiolo was dead.

In the month of April 1836 no one had had any news from or of Albert de Savarus. Jérôme and Mariette were to be married, but the Baroness confidentially desired her maid to wait till her daughter was married, saying that the two weddings might take place at the same time.

'It is time that Rosalie should be married,' said the Baroness one day to Monsieur de Watteville. 'She is nineteen, and she is fearfully altered in these last months.'

'I do not know what ails her,' said the Baron.

'When fathers do not know what ails their daughters, mothers can guess,' said the Baroness; 'we must get her married.'

'I am quite willing,' said the Baron. 'I shall give her les Rouxey now that the Court has settled our quarrel with the authorities of Ricevs by fixing the boundary line at three hundred feet up the side of the Dent de

Vilard. I am having a trench made to collect all the water and carry it into the lake. The village did not appeal, so the decision is final.'

'It has never yet occurred to you,' said Madame de Watteville, 'that this decision cost me thirty thousand francs handed over to Chantonnit. That peasant would take nothing else; he sold us peace.—If you give away les Rouxey, you will have nothing left,' said the Baroness.

'I do not need much,' said the Baron; 'I am breaking up.'

'You eat like an ogre!'

'Just so. But however much I may eat, I feel my legs get weaker and weaker——'

'It is from working the lathe,' said his wife.

'I do not know,' said he.

'We will marry Rosalie to Monsieur de Soulas; if you give her les Rouxey, keep the life interest. I will give them fifteen thousand francs a year in the funds. Our children can live here; I do not see that they are much to be pitied.'

'No. I shall give them les Rouxey out and out. Rosalie is fond of les Rouxey.'

'You are a queer man with your daughter! It does not occur to you to ask me if I am fond of les Rouxey.'

Rosalie, at once sent for, was informed that she was to marry Monsieur de Soulas one day early in the month of May.

'I am very much obliged to you, mother, and to you too, father, for having thought of settling me; but I do not mean to marry; I am very happy with you.'

'Mere speeches!' said the Baroness. 'You are not in love with Monsieur de Soulas, that is all.'

'If you insist on the plain truth, I will never marry Monsieur de Soulas——'

'Oh! the *never* of a girl of nineteen!' retorted her mother, with a bitter smile.

'The *never* of Mademoiselle de Watteville,' said

Rosalie with firm decision. 'My father, I imagine, has no intention of making me marry against my wishes?'

'No, indeed no!' said the poor Baron, looking affectionately at his daughter.

'Very well!' said the Baroness, sternly controlling the rage of a bigot startled at finding herself unexpectedly defied, 'you yourself, Monsieur de Watteville, may take the responsibility of settling your daughter. Consider well, Mademoiselle, for if you do not marry to my mind you will get nothing out of me!'

The quarrel thus begun between Madame de Watteville and her husband, who took his daughter's part, went so far that Rosalie and her father were obliged to spend the summer at les Rouxey; life at the Hôtel de Rupt was unendurable. It thus became known in Besançon that Mademoiselle de Watteville had positively refused the Comte de Soulas.

After their marriage Mariette and Jérôme came to les Rouxey to succeed to Modinier in due time. The Baron restored and repaired the house to suit his daughter's taste. When she heard that these improvements had cost about sixty thousand francs, and that Rosalie and her father were building a conservatory, the Baroness understood that there was a leaven of spite in her daughter. The Baron purchased various outlying plots, and a little estate worth thirty thousand francs. Madame de Watteville was told that, away from her, Rosalie showed masterly qualities, that she was taking steps to improve the value of les Rouxey, that she had treated herself to a riding habit and rode about; her father, whom she made very happy, who no longer complained of his health, and who was growing fat, accompanied her in her expeditions. As the Baroness's name-day drew near—her name was Louise—the Vicar-General came one day to les Rouxey, deputed, no doubt, by Madame de Watteville and Monsieur de Soulas, to negotiate a peace between the mother and daughter.

'That little Rosalie has a head on her shoulders,' said the folk of Besançon.

After handsomely paying up the ninety thousand francs spent on les Rouxey, the Baroness allowed her husband a thousand francs a month to live on; she would not put herself in the wrong. The father and daughter were perfectly willing to return to Besançon for the 15th of August, and to remain there till the end of the month.

When, after dinner, the Vicar-General took Mademoiselle de Watteville apart, to open the question of the marriage, by explaining to her that it was vain to think any more of Albert, of whom they had had no news for a year past, he was stopped at once by a sign from Rosalie. The strange girl took Monsieur de Grancey by the arm, and led him to a seat under a clump of rhododendrons, whence there was a view of the lake.

'Listen, dear Abbé,' said she. 'You whom I love as much as my father, for you had an affection for my Albert, I must at last confess that I committed crimes to become his wife, and he must be my husband.—Here; read this.'

She held out to him a number of the *Gazette* which she had in her apron pocket, pointing out the following paragraph under the date of Florence, May 25th:—

'The wedding of Monsieur le Duc de Rhétoré, eldest son of the Duc de Chaulieu, the former Ambassador, to Madame la Duchesse d'Argaiolo, *née* Princess Soderini, was solemnised with great splendour. Numerous entertainments given in honour of the marriage are making Florence gay. The Duchess's fortune is one of the finest in Italy, for the late Duke left her everything.'

'The woman he loved is married,' said she. 'I divided them.'

'You? How?' asked the Abbé.

Rosalie was about to reply, when she was interrupted by a loud cry from two of the gardeners, following on the sound of a body falling into the water; she started, and

ran off screaming, 'Oh! father!'—The Baron had disappeared.

In trying to reach a piece of granite on which he fancied he saw the impression of a shell, a circumstance which would have contradicted some system of geology, Monsieur de Watteville had gone down the slope, lost his balance, and slipped into the lake, which, of course, was deepest close under the roadway. The men had the greatest difficulty in enabling the Baron to catch hold of a pole pushed down at the place where the water was bubbling, but at last they pulled him out, covered with mud, in which he had sunk; he was getting deeper and deeper in, by dint of struggling. Monsieur de Watteville had dined heavily, digestion was in progress, and was thus checked.

When he had been undressed, washed, and put to bed, he was in such evident danger that two servants at once set out on horseback: one to ride to Besançon, and the other to fetch the nearest doctor and surgeon. When Madame de Watteville arrived, eight hours later, with the first medical aid from Besançon, they found Monsieur de Watteville past all hope, in spite of the intelligent treatment of the Rouxey doctor. The fright had produced serous effusion on the brain, and the shock to the digestion was helping to kill the poor man.

This death, which would never have happened, said Madame de Watteville, if her husband had stayed at Besançon, was ascribed by her to her daughter's obstinacy. She took an aversion for Rosalie, abandoning herself to grief and regrets that were evidently exaggerated. She spoke of the Baron as 'her dear lamb!'

The last of the Wattevilles was buried on an island in the lake at les Rouxey, where the Baroness had a little Gothic monument erected of white marble, like that called the tomb of Héloïse at Père-Lachaise.

A month after this catastrophe the mother and daughter had settled in the Hôtel de Rupt, where they

lived in savage silence. Rosalie was suffering from real sorrow, which had no visible outlet; she accused herself of her father's death, and she feared another disaster, much greater in her eyes, and very certainly her own work; neither Girardet the attorney nor the Abbé de Grancey could obtain any information concerning Albert. This silence was appalling. In a paroxysm of repentance she felt that she must confess to the Vicar-General the horrible machinations by which she had separated Francesca and Albert. They had been simple, but formidable. Mademoiselle de Watteville had intercepted Albert's letters to the Duchess as well as that in which Francesca announced her husband's illness, warning her lover that she could write to him no more during the time while she was devoted, as was her duty, to the care of the dying man. Thus, while Albert was wholly occupied with election matters, the Duchess had written him only two letters; one in which she told him that the Duc d'Argaiolo was in danger, and one announcing her widowhood—two noble and beautiful letters, which Rosalie kept back.

After several nights' labour she succeeded in imitating Albert's writing very perfectly. She had substituted three letters of her own writing for three of Albert's, and the rough copies which she showed to the old priest made him shudder—the genius of evil was revealed in them to such perfection. Rosalie, writing in Albert's name, had prepared the Duchess for a change in the Frenchman's feelings, falsely representing him as faithless, and she had answered the news of the Duc d'Argaiolo's death by announcing the marriage ere long of Albert and Mademoiselle de Watteville. The two letters, intended to cross on the road, had, in fact, done so. The infernal cleverness with which the letters were written so much astonished the Vicar-General that he read them a second time. Francesca, stabbed to the heart by a girl who wanted to kill love in her rival, had

answered the last in these four words: 'You are free. Farewell.'

'Purely moral crimes, which give no hold to human justice, are the most atrocious and detestable,' said the Abbé severely. 'God often punishes them on earth; herein lies the reason of the terrible catastrophes which to us seem inexplicable. Of all secret crimes buried in the mystery of private life, the most disgraceful is that of breaking the seal of a letter, or of reading it surreptitiously. Every one, whoever it may be, and urged by whatever reason, who is guilty of such an act has stained his honour beyond retrieving.

'Do you not feel all that is touching, that is heavenly in the story of the youthful page, falsely accused, and carrying the letter containing the order for his execution, who sets out without a thought of ill, and whom Providence protects and saves—miraculously, we say! But do you know wherein the miracle lies? Virtue has a glory as potent as that of innocent childhood.

'I say these things not meaning to admonish you,' said the old priest, with deep grief. 'I, alas! am not your spiritual director; you are not kneeling at the feet of God; I am your friend, appalled by dread of what your punishment may be. What has become of that unhappy Albert? Has he, perhaps, killed himself? There was tremendous passion under his assumption of calm. I understand now that old Prince Soderini, the father of the Duchesse d'Argaiolo, came here to take back his daughter's letters and portraits. This was the thunderbolt that fell on Albert's head, and he went off, no doubt, to try to justify himself. But how is it that in fourteen months he has given us no news of himself?'

'Oh! if I marry him, he will be so happy!'

'Happy?—He does not love you. Besides, you have no great fortune to give him. Your mother detests you; you made her a fierce reply which rankles, and which

will be your ruin. When she told you yesterday that obedience was the only way to repair your errors, and reminded you of the need for marrying, mentioning Amédée—'If you are so fond of him, marry himself, mother!"—Did you, or did you not, fling these words in her teeth?'

'Yes,' said Rosalie.

'Well, I know her,' Monsieur de Grancey went on. 'In a few months she will be Comtesse de Soulas! She will be sure to have children; she will give Monsieur de Soulas forty thousand francs a year; she will benefit him in other ways, and reduce your share of her fortune as much as possible. You will be poor as long as she lives, and she is but eight-and-thirty! Your whole estate will be the land of les Rouxey, and the small share left to you after your father's legal debts are settled, if, indeed, your mother should consent to forgo her claims on les Rouxey. From the point of view of material advantages, you have done badly for yourself; from the point of view of feeling, I imagine you have wrecked your life. Instead of going to your mother——' Rosalie shook her head fiercely.

'To your mother,' the priest went on, 'and to religion, where you would, at the first impulse of your heart, have found enlightenment, counsel, and guidance, you chose to act in your own way, knowing nothing of life, and listening only to passion!'

These words of wisdom terrified Mademoiselle de Watteville.

'And what ought I to do now?' she asked after a pause.

'To repair your wrong-doing, you must ascertain its extent,' said the Abbé.

'Well, I will write to the only man who can know anything of Albert's fate, Monsieur Léopold Hannequin, a notary in Paris, his friend from childhood.'

'Write no more, unless to do honour to truth,' said

the Vicar-General. 'Place the real and the false letters in my hands, confess everything in detail as though I were the keeper of your conscience, asking me how you may expiate your sins, and doing as I bid you. I shall see—for, above all things, restore this unfortunate man to his innocence in the eyes of the woman he had made his divinity on earth. Though he has lost his happiness, Albert must still hope for justification.'

Rosalie promised to obey the Abbé, hoping that the steps he might take would perhaps end in bringing Albert back to her.

Not long after Mademoiselle de Watteville's confession a clerk came to Besançon from Monsieur Léopold Hannequin, armed with a power of attorney from Albert; he called first on Monsieur Girardet, begging his assistance in selling the house belonging to Monsieur Savaron. The attorney undertook to do this out of friendship for Albert. The clerk from Paris sold the furniture, and with the proceeds could repay some money owed by Savaron to Girardet, who on the occasion of his inexplicable departure had lent him five thousand francs while undertaking to collect his assets. When Girardet asked what had become of the handsome and noble pleader, to whom he had been much attached, the clerk replied that no one knew but his master, and that the notary had seemed greatly distressed by the contents of the last letter he had received from Monsieur Albert de Savarus.

On hearing this, the Vicar-General wrote to Léopold. This was the worthy notary's reply:—

'To Monsieur l'Abbé de Grancey,
Vicar-General of the Diocese of Besançon.

'Paris.

'Alas, Monsieur, it is in nobody's power to restore Albert to the life of the world; he has renounced it. He is a novice in the monastery of the Grande Chartreuse near

Grenoble. You know, better than I who have but just learned it, that on the threshold of that cloister everything dies. Albert, foreseeing that I should go to him, placed the General of the Order between my utmost efforts and himself. I know his noble soul well enough to be sure that he is the victim of some odious plot unknown to us; but everything is at an end. The Duchesse d'Argaiolo, now Duchesse de Rhétoré, seems to me to have carried severity to an extreme. At Belgirate, which she had left when Albert flew thither, she had left instructions leading him to believe that she was living in London. From London Albert went in search of her to Naples, and from Naples to Rome, where she was now engaged to the Duc de Rhétoré. When Albert succeeded in seeing Madame d'Argaiolo, at Florence, it was at the ceremony of her marriage.

'Our poor friend swooned in church, and even when he was in danger of death he could never obtain any explanation from this woman, who must have had I know not what in her heart. For seven months Albert had travelled in pursuit of a cruel creature who thought it sport to escape him; he knew not where or how to catch her.

'I saw him on his way through Paris; and if you had seen him, as I did, you would have felt that not a word might be spoken about the Duchess, at the risk of bringing on an attack which might have wrecked his reason. If he had known what his crime was, he might have found means to justify himself; but being falsely accused of being married!—what could he do? Albert is dead, quite dead to the world. He longed for rest; let us hope that the deep silence and prayer into which he has thrown himself may give him happiness in another guise. You, Monsieur, who have known him, must greatly pity him; and pity his friends also.

Yours, etc.

As soon as he received this letter the good Vicar-General wrote to the General of the Carthusian order, and this was the letter he received from Albert Savarus :—

'Brother Albert to Monsieur l'Abbé de Grancey, Vicar-General of the Diocese of Besançon.

'La Grande Chartreuse.

'I recognised your tender soul, dear and well-beloved Vicar-General, and your still youthful heart, in all that the reverend Father General of our Order has just told me. You have understood the only wish that lurks in the depths of my heart so far as the things of the world are concerned—to get justice done to my feelings by her who has treated me so badly! But before leaving me at liberty to avail myself of your offer, the General wanted to know that my vocation was sincere; he was so kind as to tell me his idea, on finding that I was determined to preserve absolute silence on this point. If I had yielded to the temptation to rehabilitate the man of the world, the friar would have been rejected by this monastery. Grace has certainly done her work; but, though short, the struggle was not the less keen or the less painful. Is not this enough to show you that I could never return to the world?

'Hence my forgiveness, which you ask for the author of so much woe, is entire and without a thought of vindictiveness. I will pray to God to forgive that young lady as I forgive her, and as I shall beseech him to give Madame de Rhétoré a life of happiness. Ah! whether it be death, or the obstinate hand of a young girl madly bent on being loved, or one of the blows ascribed to chance, must we not all obey God? Sorrow in some souls makes a vast void through which the Divine Voice rings. I learned too late the bearings of this life on that which awaits us; all in me is worn out; I could not serve in the ranks of the Church Militant, and I lay the remains of an almost extinct life at the foot of the altar.

'This is the last time I shall ever write. You alone, who loved me, and whom I loved so well, could make me break the law of oblivion I imposed on myself when I entered these headquarters of Saint Bruno, but you are always especially named in the prayers of

'BROTHER ALBERT.

'*November* 1836.'

'Everything is for the best perhaps,' thought the Abbe de Grancey.

When he showed this letter to Rosalie, who, with a pious impulse, kissed the lines which contained her forgiveness, he said to her—

'Well, now that he is lost to you, will you not be reconciled to your mother and marry the Comte de Soulas?'

'Only if Albert should order it,' said she.

'But you see it is impossible to consult him. The General of the Order would not allow it.'

'If I were to go to see him?'

'No Carthusian sees any visitor. Besides, no woman but the Queen of France may enter a Carthusian monastery,' said the Abbé. 'So you have no longer any excuse for not marrying young Monsieur de Soulas.'

'I do not wish to destroy my mother's happiness,' retorted Rosalie.

'Satan!' exclaimed the Vicar-General.

Towards the end of that winter the worthy Abbé de Grancey died. This good friend no longer stood between Madame de Watteville and her daughter, to soften the impact of those two iron wills.

The event he had foretold took place. In the month of August 1837 Madame de Watteville was married to Monsieur de Soulas in Paris, whither she went by Rosalie's advice, the girl making a show of kindness and sweetness to her mother. Madame de Watteville believed in this affection on the part of her daughter,

who simply desired to go to Paris to give herself the luxury of a bitter revenge; she thought of nothing but avenging Savarus by torturing her rival.

Mademoiselle de Watteville had been declared legally of age; she was, in fact, not far from one-and-twenty. Her mother, to settle with her finally, had resigned her claims on les Rouxey, and the daughter had signed a release for all the inheritance of the Baron de Watteville. Rosalie encouraged her mother to marry the Comte de Soulas and settle all her own fortune on him.

'Let us each be perfectly free,' she said.

Madame de Soulas, who had been uneasy as to her daughter's intentions, was touched by this liberality, and made her a present of six thousand francs a year in the funds as conscience money. As the Comtesse de Soulas had an income of forty-eight thousand francs from her own lands, and was quite incapable of alienating them in order to diminish Rosalie's share, Mademoiselle de Watteville was still a fortune to marry, of eighteen hundred thousand francs; les Rouxey, with the Baron's additions, and certain improvements, might yield twenty thousand francs a year, besides the value of the house, rents, and preserves. So Rosalie and her mother, who soon adopted the Paris style and fashions, easily obtained introductions to the best society. The golden key—eighteen hundred thousand francs—embroidered on Mademoiselle de Watteville's stomacher, did more for the Comtesse de Soulas than her pretensions *à la* de Rupt, her inappropriate pride, or even her rather distant great connections.

In the month of February 1838 Rosalie, who was eagerly courted by many young men, achieved the purpose which had brought her to Paris. This was to meet the Duchesse de Rhétoré, to see this wonderful woman, and to overwhelm her with perennial remorse. Rosalie gave herself up to the most bewildering elegance and vanities in order to face the Duchess on an equal footing.

They first met at a ball given annually after 1830 for the benefit of the pensioners on the old Civil List. A young man, prompted by Rosalie, pointed her out to the Duchess, saying—

'There is a very remarkable young person, a strong-minded young lady too! She drove a clever man into a monastery—the Grande Chartreuse—a man of immense capabilities, Albert de Savarus, whose career she wrecked. She is Mademoiselle de Watteville, the famous Besançon heiress——'

The Duchess turned pale. Rosalie's eyes met hers with one of those flashes which, between woman and woman, are more fatal than the pistol shots of a duel. Francesca Soderini, who had suspected that Albert might be innocent, hastily quitted the ball-room, leaving the speaker at his wits' end to guess what terrible blow he had inflicted on the beautiful Duchesse de Rhétoré.

'If you want to hear more about Albert, come to the Opera ball on Tuesday with a marigold in your hand.'

This anonymous note, sent by Rosalie to the Duchess, brought the unhappy Italian to the ball, where Mademoiselle de Watteville placed in her hand all Albert's letters, with that written to Léopold Hannequin by the Vicar-General, and the notary's reply, and even that in which she had written her own confession to the Abbé de Grancey.

'I do not choose to be the only sufferer,' she said to her rival, 'for one has been as ruthless as the other.'

After enjoying the dismay stamped on the Duchess's beautiful face, Rosalie went away; she went out no more, and returned to Besançon with her mother.

Mademoiselle de Watteville, who lived alone on her estate of les Rouxey, riding, hunting, refusing two or three offers a year, going to Besançon four or five times in the course of the winter, and busying herself with

improving her land, was regarded as a very eccentric personage. She was one of the celebrities of the Eastern provinces.

Madame de Soulas has two children, a boy and a girl, and she has grown younger; but young Monsieur de Soulas has aged a good deal.

'My fortune has cost me dear,' said he to young Chavoncourt. 'Really to know a bigot it is unfortunately necessary to marry her!'

Mademoiselle de Watteville behaves in the most extraordinary manner. 'She has vagaries,' people say. Every year she goes to gaze at the walls of the Grande Chartreuse. Perhaps she dreams of imitating her grand-uncle by forcing the walls of the monastery to find a husband, as Watteville broke through those of his monastery to recover his liberty.

She left Besançon in 1841, intending, it was said, to get married; but the real reason of this expedition is still unknown, for she returned home in a state which forbids her ever appearing in society again. By one of those chances of which the Abbé de Grancey had spoken, she happened to be on the Loire in a steamboat of which the boiler burst. Mademoiselle de Watteville was so severely injured that she lost her right arm and her left leg; her face is marked with fearful scars, which have bereft her of her beauty; her health, cruelly upset, leaves her few days free from suffering. In short, she now never leaves the Chartreuse of les Rouxey, where she leads a life wholly devoted to religious practices.

PARIS, *May* 1842.

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